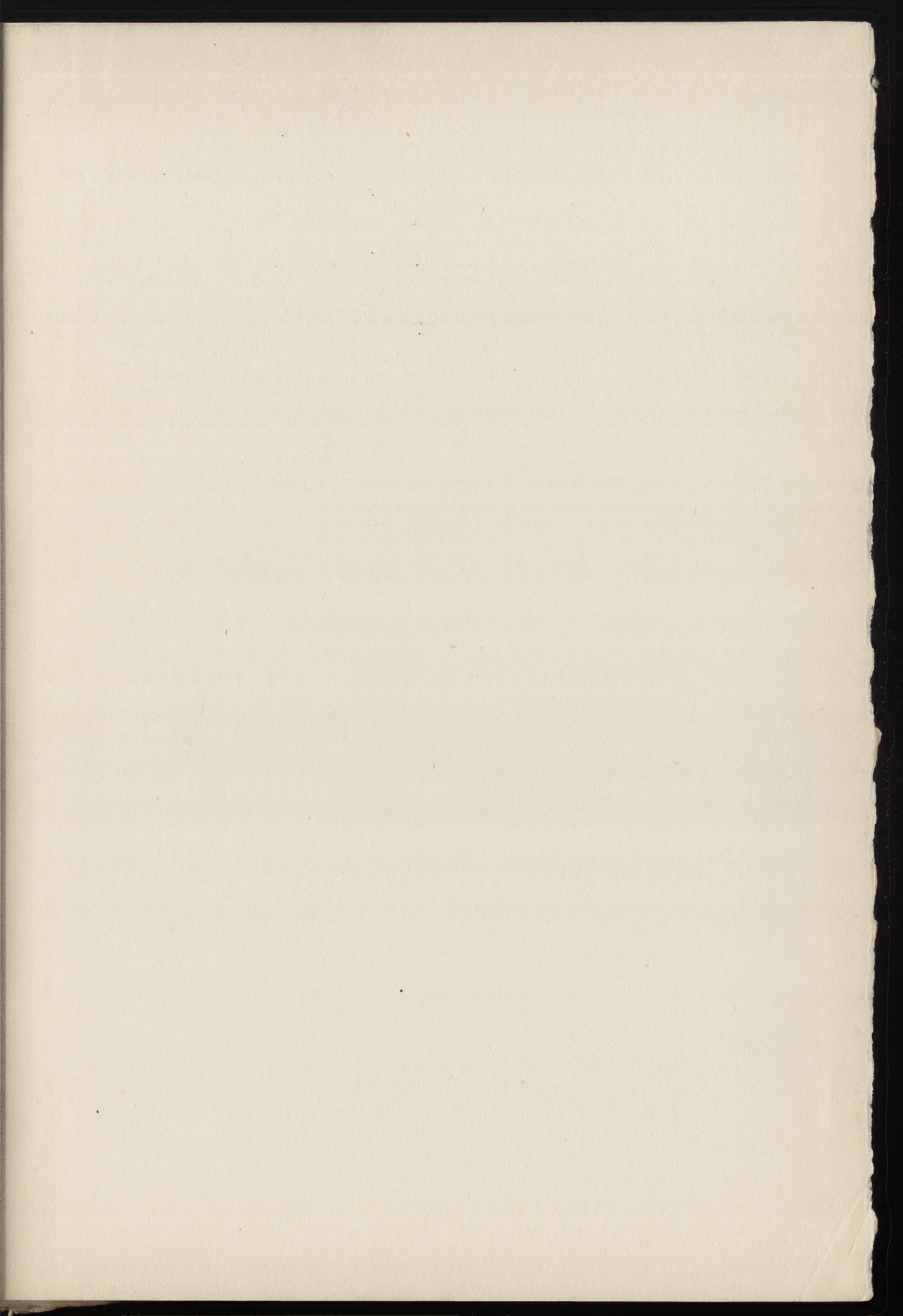


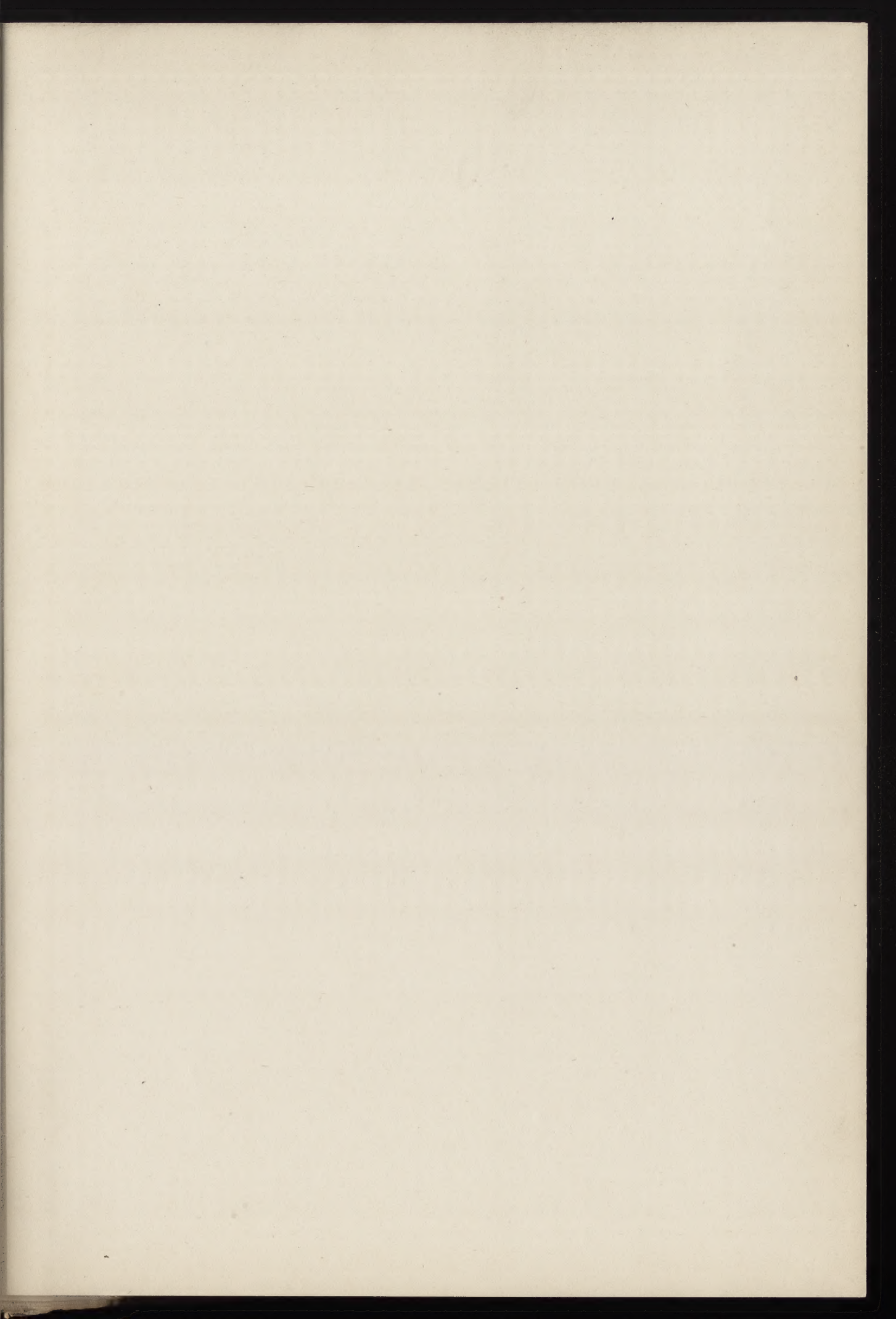
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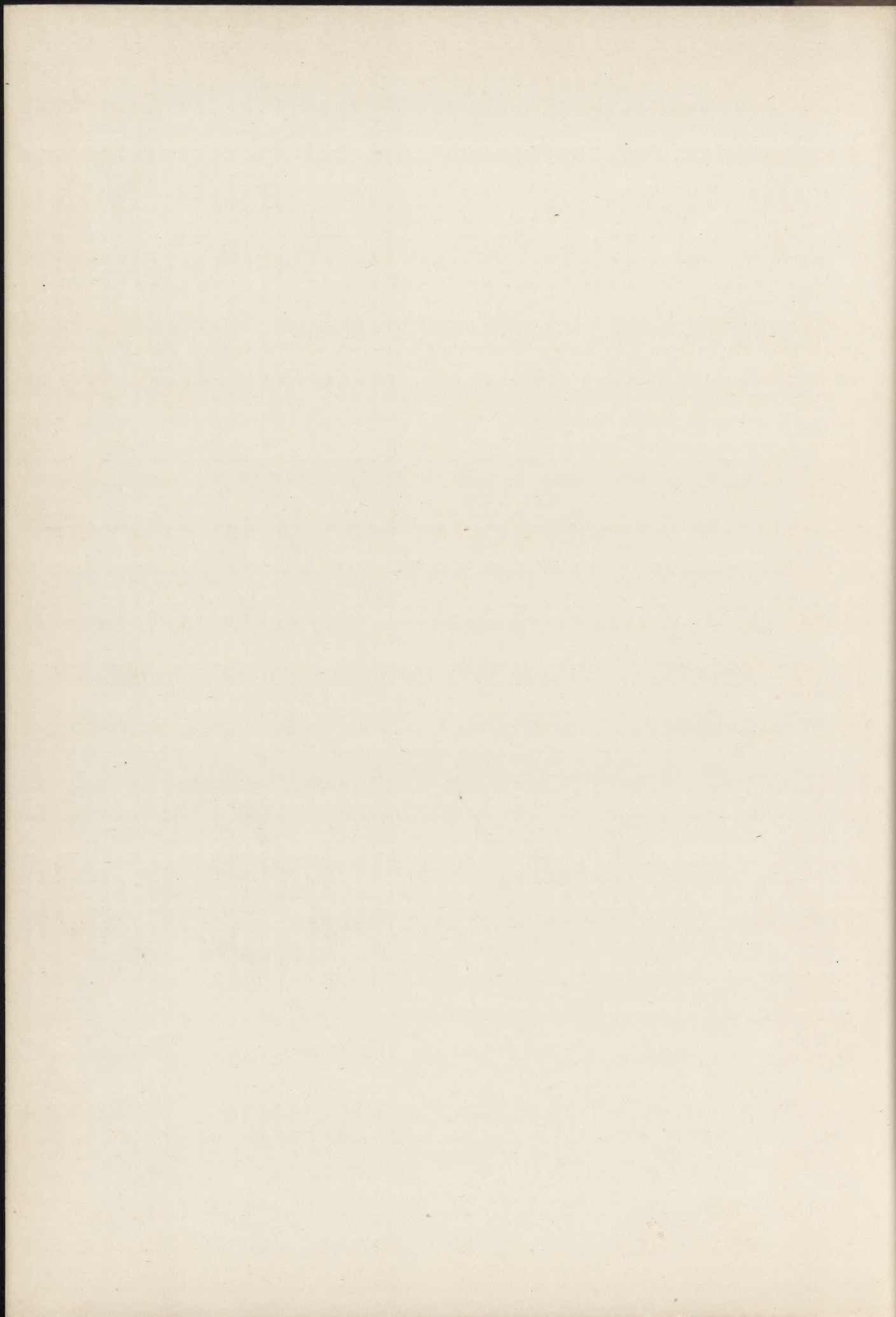
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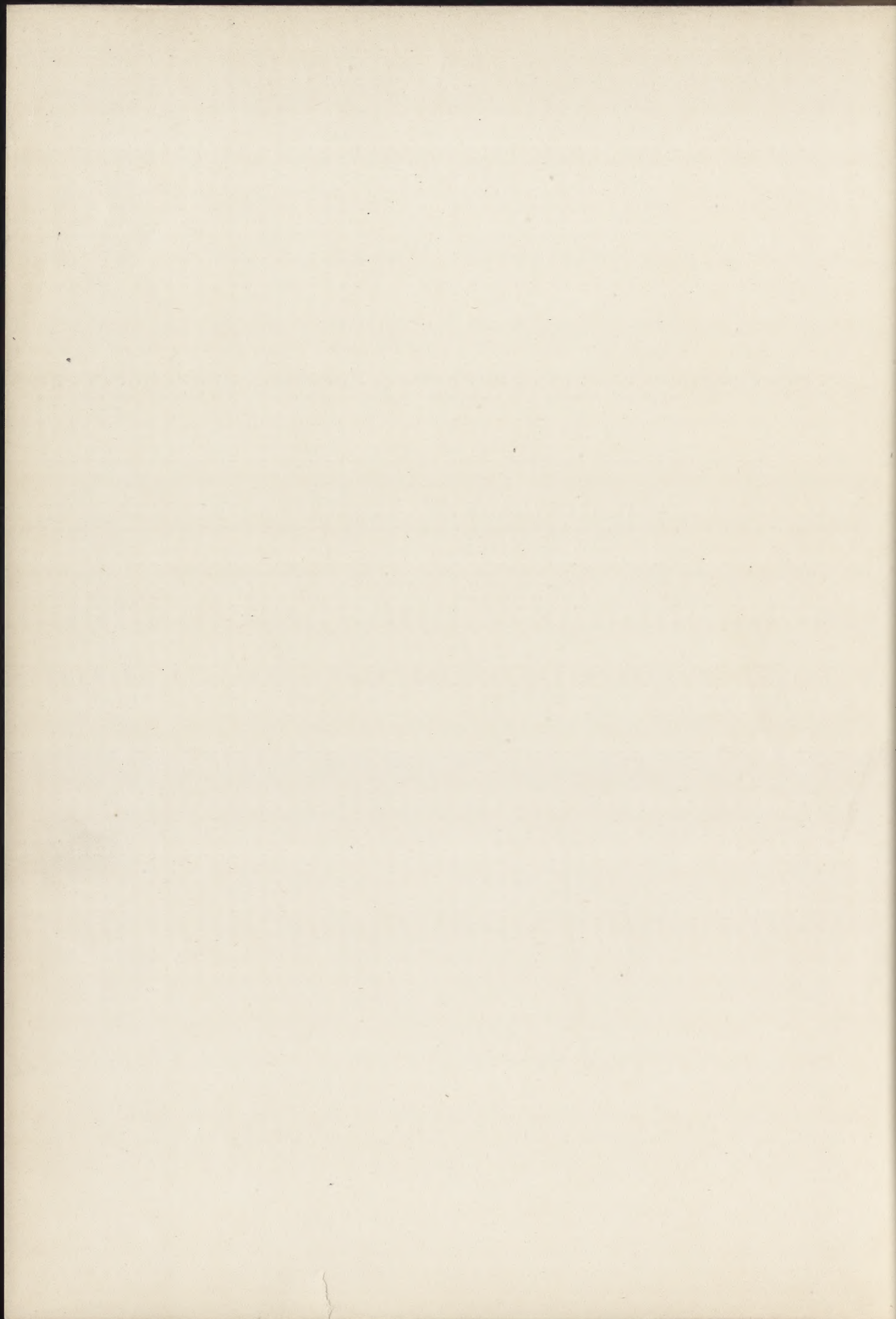
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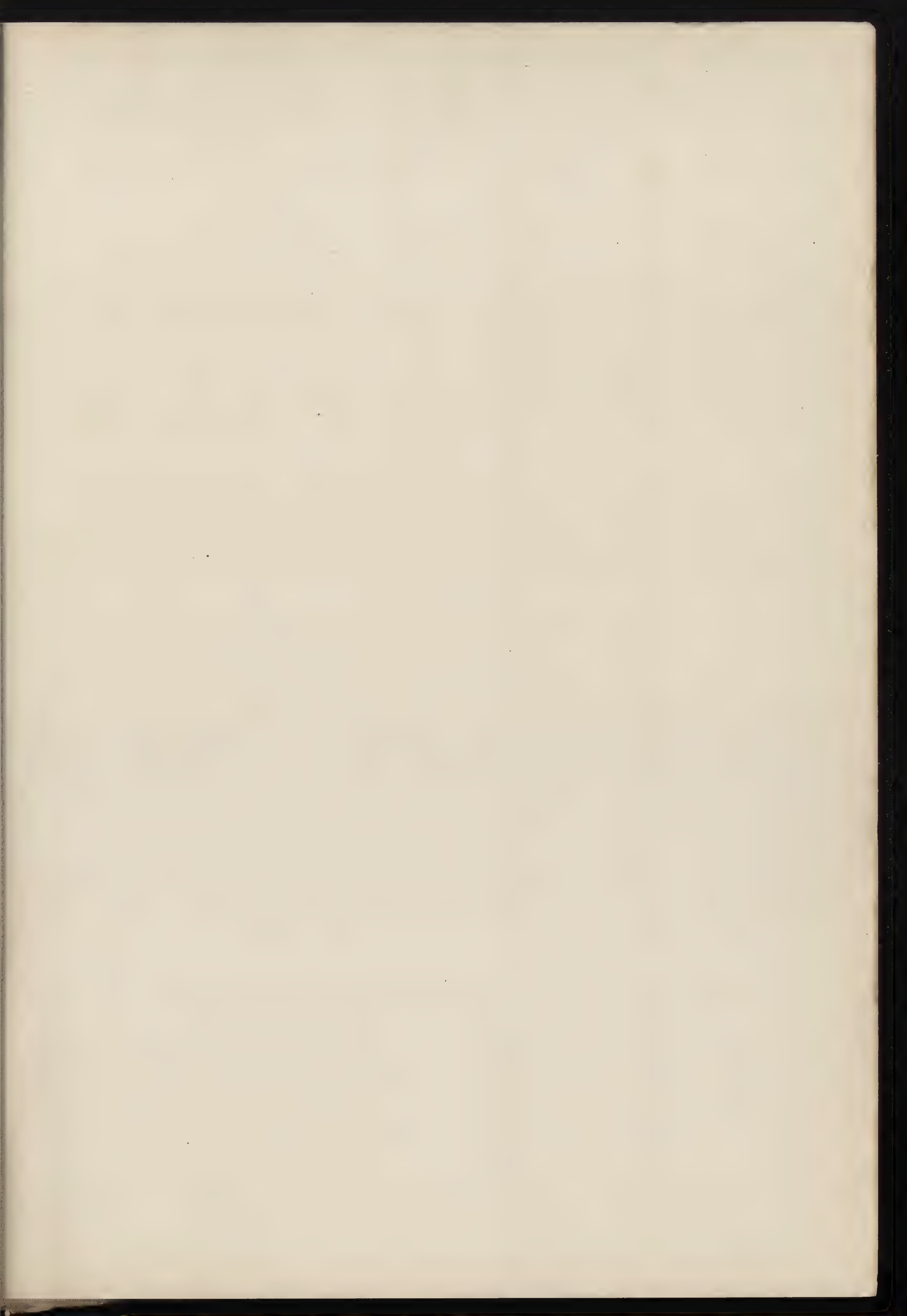






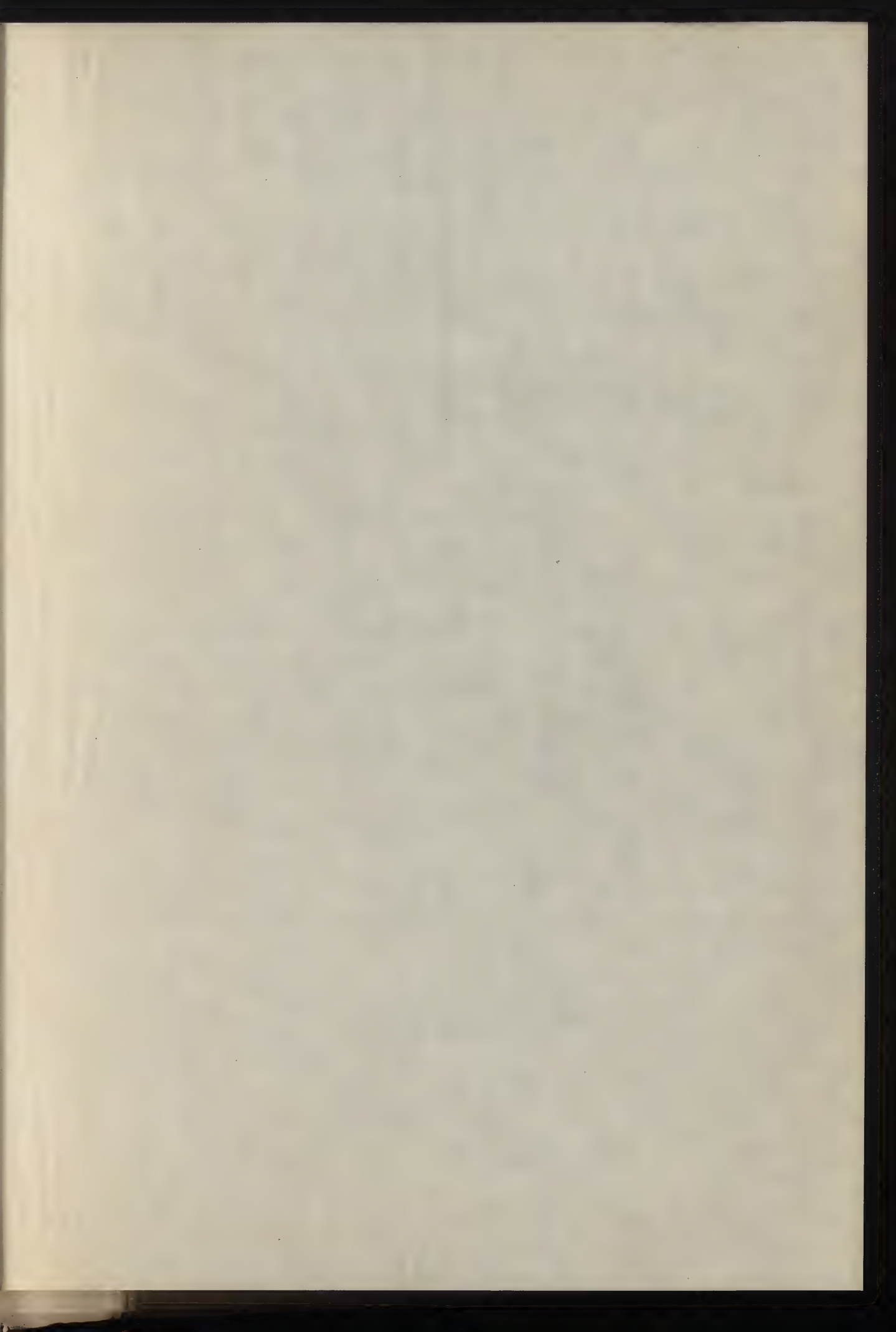
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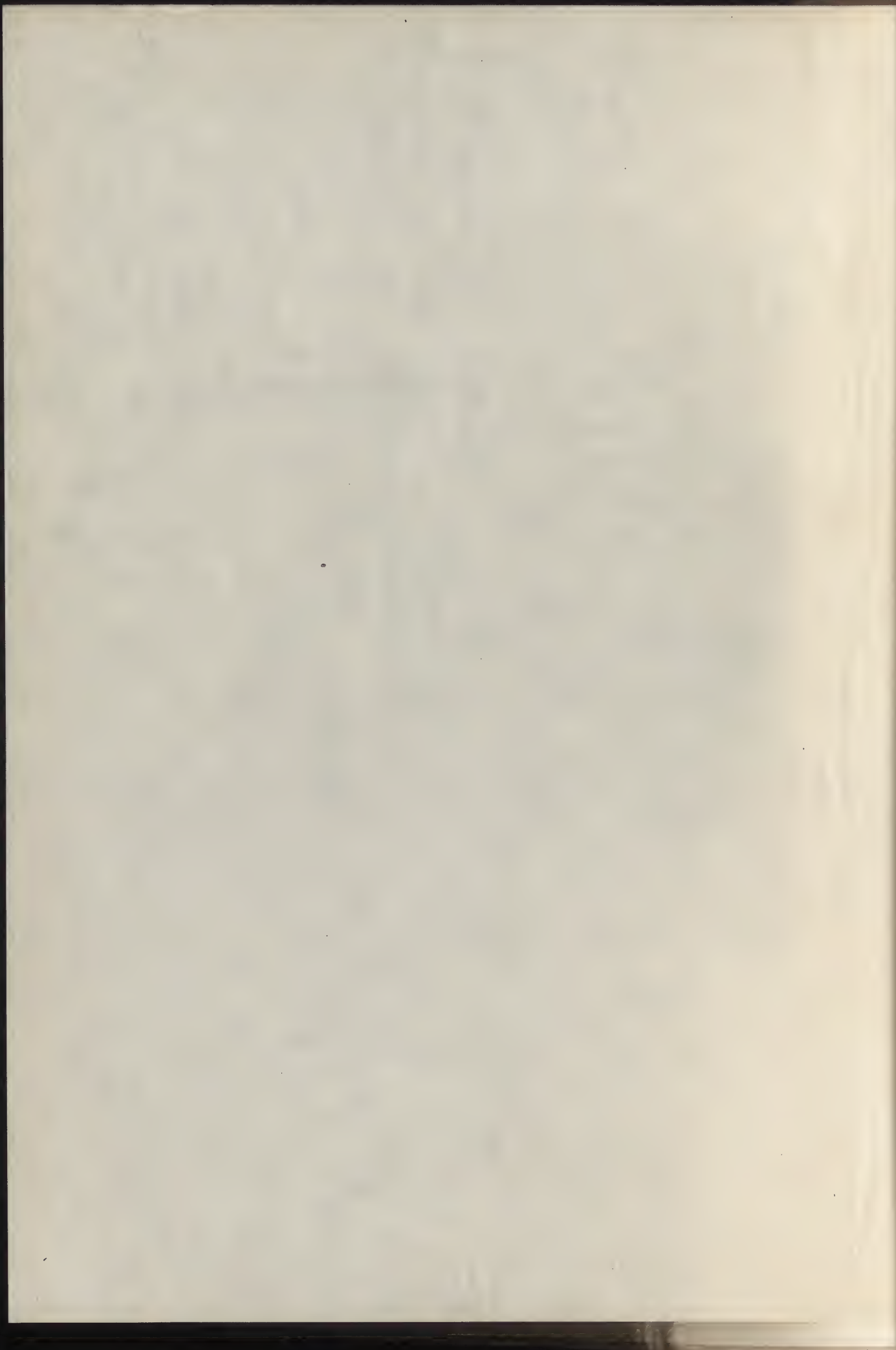






A VIEW FROM WHISTLER'S WINDOW





WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

BY
OTTO H. BACHER

ILLUSTRATED WITH MANY REPRODUCTIONS OF
WHISTLER'S WORK, AND OF ETCHINGS AND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR



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1909

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TO MY FRIEND,
WILLIAM W. ANDREW, A.M.,
BY WHOSE AID AND KIND ASSISTANCE
THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN, AND
TO MY WIFE,
WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT MADE
POSSIBLE ITS COMPLETION.



PREFACE

THE Venetian period in the life of James McNeill Whistler is, perhaps, the least familiar to his friends, yet a very important one in his career. It was my good fortune to know him intimately during the greater part of it. To me, it was a pleasant and helpful relationship which existed between us. After his death, I received many requests to write of this period from friends who knew of my acquaintance with him. This book is an answer to these solicitations and, if no other purpose be served, I trust that it will prove a source of enjoyment and help to those who wish to know the great modern master of art.

O. H. B.

Bronxville, New York.
September, 1907

PUBLISHERS' NOTE
TO SECOND EDITION

Miss Birnie Philip, executrix under the will of the late James McNeill Whistler, having objected to the publication in the first edition of this book of letters written by Mr. Whistler, these letters have been withdrawn and will not appear in this or subsequent editions.

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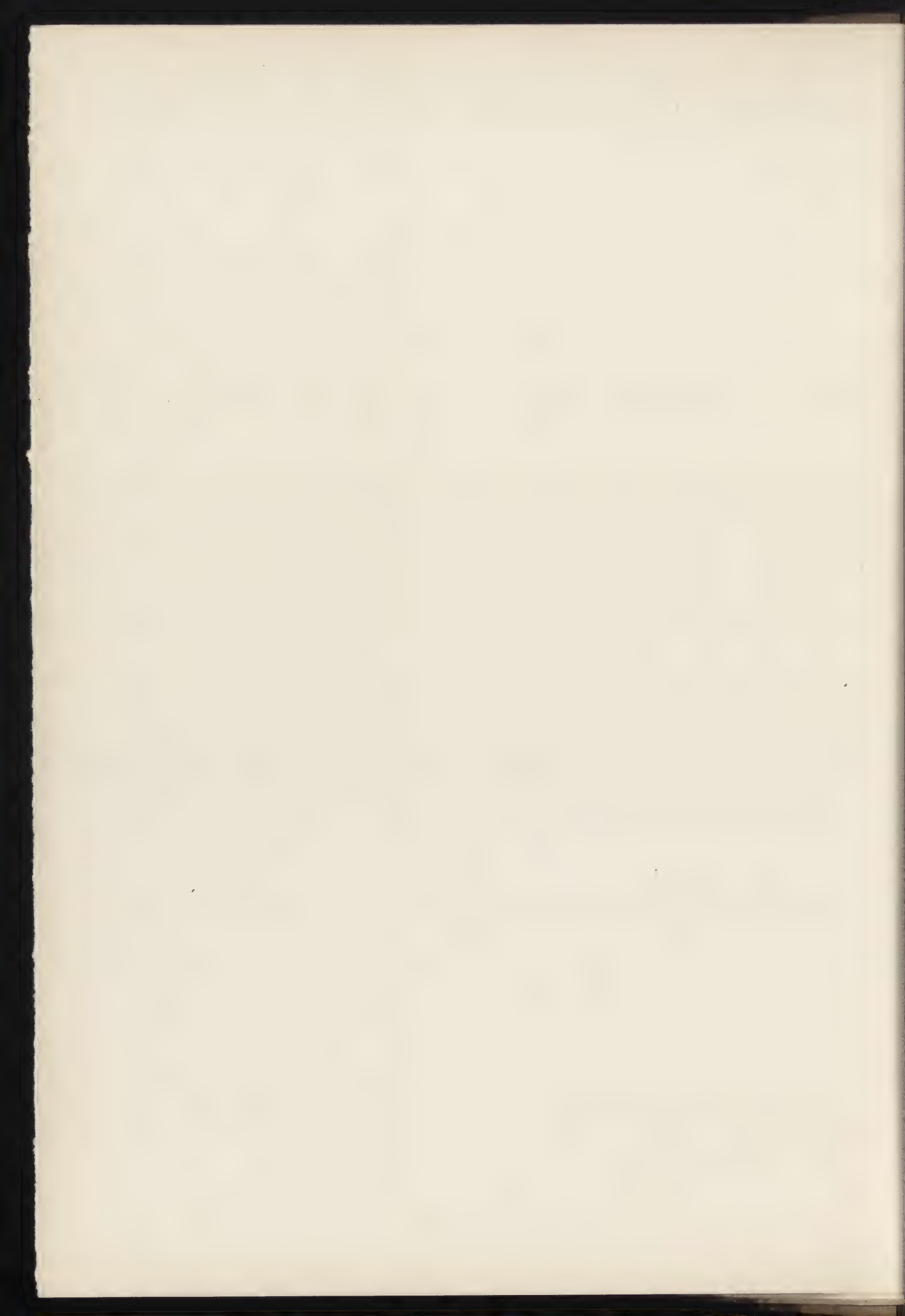
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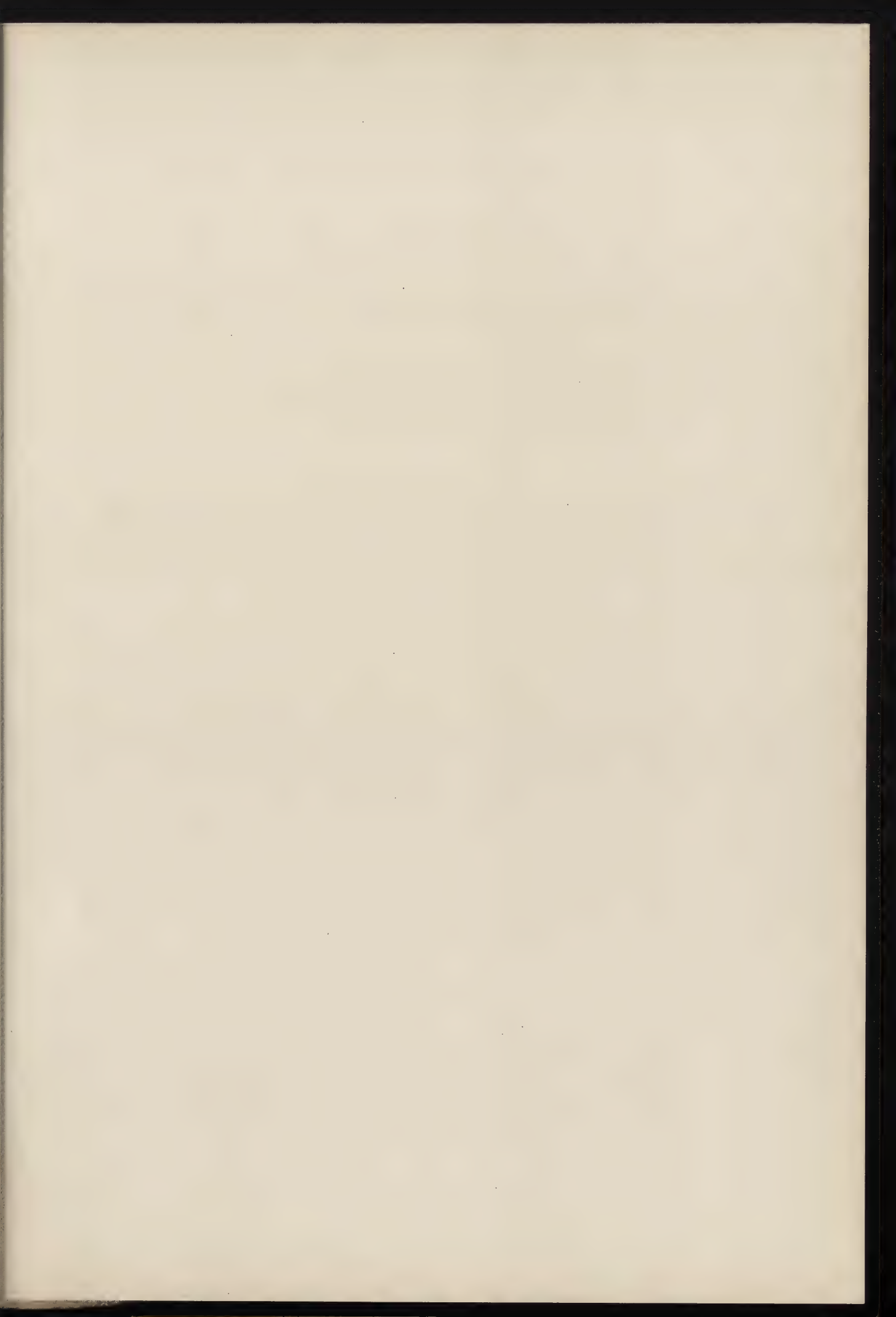
I

“**D**O any of you know that Whistler is in Venice?” was some one’s casual remark to a group of young artists seated about a table in the Piazza San Marco, near the Campanile. Had that exquisite landmark of Venice fallen then and there, instead of some years later, I do not believe I should have been more astonished than I was when I heard that delightful bit of news.

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On further inquiry, I satisfied myself that there was no mistake in the report, and also ascertained that the painter had arrived some time during the previous winter, and had completed many etchings and pastels, under the auspices of the Fine Arts Society of London.

One day, some time later, as several of us were leaving the Academy of Fine Arts, we saw the American consul, Mr. Grist, and a curious, sailorlike stranger coming down the steps of the iron bridge that crosses the Grand Canal. The latter was short, thin, and wiry, with a head that seemed large and out of proportion to the lithe figure. His large, wide-brimmed, soft, brown hat was tilted far back, and suggested a brown halo. It was a background for his curly black hair and





First state: Etched from nature in acid bath



Second state: Same with addition of boats in foreground in dry-point



Fourth state: Same with further additions in dry-point

AM



Seventh and final state: Substitution of new vessels, etched

VIEW FROM WHISTLER'S WINDOW

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singular white lock, high over his right eye, like a fluffy feather carelessly left where it had lodged. A dark sack-coat almost covered an extremely low turned-down collar, while a narrow black ribbon did service as a tie, the long pennant-like ends of which, flapping about, now and then hit his single eyeglass.

"These are all American boys," I heard the consul say, and when we reached him, he said, indicating us all, with a motion of his hand: "Boys, let me introduce you to Mr. Whistler."

"Whistler is charmed," was the greeting to each one, as we shook his hand.

When my turn came, the consul said, "Mr. Whistler, this is the boy who etches."

"Ah, indeed! Whistler is quite

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charmed, and will be glad to see your work."

He was charming and gracious to all, now and then uttering his odd, short, piercing "Ha! ha!" Later, as I knew him better, I learned that laugh so well that I could readily distinguish whether it was a signal of danger or of peace.

I next met him at a trattoria where he and I and one other person were guests at dinner of Mr. Grist. Whistler had a fund of pleasant things to talk about and I was soon put at my ease. I was fascinated with his pleasant face, voice, keen, nervous eyes, and long, shapely hands. The "white feather," as he called his single white lock of hair, attracted my attention all the evening. His talk was full of surprising touches,—not unlike

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his positive one-stroke method with paint on canvas, that we now know as Whistler's,—and generally humorous and free from vulgarity, and always keen and witty. He seemed interested by the fact that I etched and knew all of his etchings, and my press (which was larger than the usual portable press) came in for a good share of attention. I told him that I brought it from Munich where it had been built from a design in the first edition of Hamerton's "Etching and Etchers." I had to give him the exact size of the largest plate it was capable of printing. He asked, "Did you bring with you good ink from Germany? It cannot be found in Venice. Good! I will come and try your ink and press, and take a look at your collection of Rembrandts and the

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prints you have of mine." This was the beginning of a friendship that lasted through life. "I am coming to see you soon. Good-night," were his last words.

I did not see him again for a month, but it seemed longer, because I kept close to my lodgings, fearing that if I should go away I would miss him. I did this until my patience was exhausted; then I went about my work and forgot the promised call.

A score of students, all pupils of Mr. Frank Duveneck, who had been with that painter in his school in Germany and had followed him to Florence, had come on to Venice to be with him for the summer, and half a dozen of us were living in the Casa Jankovitz, the rest being scattered about the immediate neighbor-

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hood. We led the average student life, all working enthusiastically in a vast field of new subjects, some of which could be reached only in our own little boats, which also served us as well for a frolic in the lagoons when the day's work was over. None of us was burdened with money, and we breakfasted or lunched in any place suited to our purse or near to our subjects. As a rule we dined "down-town," as we called any place near St. Mark's, and preferably at the restaurant where we would find Duveneck.

One dismal, rainy Sunday many of my fellow-students had gradually congregated in my quarters. Not a bed, chair, or corner was unoccupied, and the room was thick with smoke, noise, and laughter. The uproar within stifled the fury

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

of the storm and the torrents of rain swashing hard against the windows. Suddenly one voice, louder than the rest, was heard above the turmoil, crying, "Some one 's knocking.—Come in!" "Stay out!" yelled another, and with a bang a shoe struck the door, to welcome a supposed companion trying some trick.

In spite of the uproar, I thought I heard a gentle rap, so I opened the door. There stood Whistler, wet and smiling, asking in a gentle voice, amid a painful stillness:

"May I come in?"

And in he came. He accepted the situation charmingly, in the spirit of the fun. He received a warm welcome and dry clothes, and was soon the center of a

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group of young fellows whom he delighted with his sparkling pleasantries. He liked our surroundings, was charmed with the vistas from our windows, and asked permission to come and sketch from them, which was eagerly given. On his way out he took a hasty look at my press, which was in a corner of another room.

A few days later he came and worked from our windows, and this he continued to do almost daily. Sometimes he would work from one window with pastels, and from another window would begin another subject for late afternoon work, upon which he worked several afternoons until it was finished. Many of his well-known etchings and pastels were made from these windows. He was with us so

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often, and knew us so well, that he never hesitated to come to my rooms at any time.

About two weeks later he decided to move from his quarters on the opposite side of the Grand Canal, near the Church of the Frari, to our house, which was on the Riva near the Giardino Pubblico. Making his arrangements beforehand, he moved his goods in his gondola, arriving one sunny morning. He occupied a single room with two windows looking toward the Doge's Palace, San Giorgio, and the Salute. This probably attracted him more than anything else. Surrounded by all that was most beautiful in Venice, our quarters were wholly desirable. Signor Jankovitz, the proprietor, was an old Italian mender of clocks and



VIEW OF THE CASTELLO QUARTER FROM NEAR THE CASA JANKOVITZ, WHERE WHISTLER LODGED



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

compasses, while Signora Jankovitz rented rooms above his little shop.

Most of the boys had purchased rugs, draperies, and antiques with which to fix up their rooms, but Whistler did not do this, having hardly anything in the way of decoration. The only adornment was a single small photograph from his central figure subject in the Peacock Room. I believe it was of the owner seated on a bank and pictured as a bird with golden feathers in the shape of coins. It was not pleasant. In a conspicuous place, he had a photograph of himself, with a most disagreeable sneer upon his face. He seemed to like it, and often said, "That is the way Whistler wants his enemies to see him."

Our life in their house was one succes-

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sion of happy incidents and covered over half a year. On clear, sunlight days, we often watched the fishermen coloring the sails of their boats which were moored in picturesque groups, near the Riva below our windows. Spreading the triangular canvas on the smooth, marble walks, they covered them with a mixture of dry paint and salt water, using a sponge with the dexterity of a brush. After both sides of the sail were covered, it was dried in the sun and dipped in the canal to remove the surplus paint.

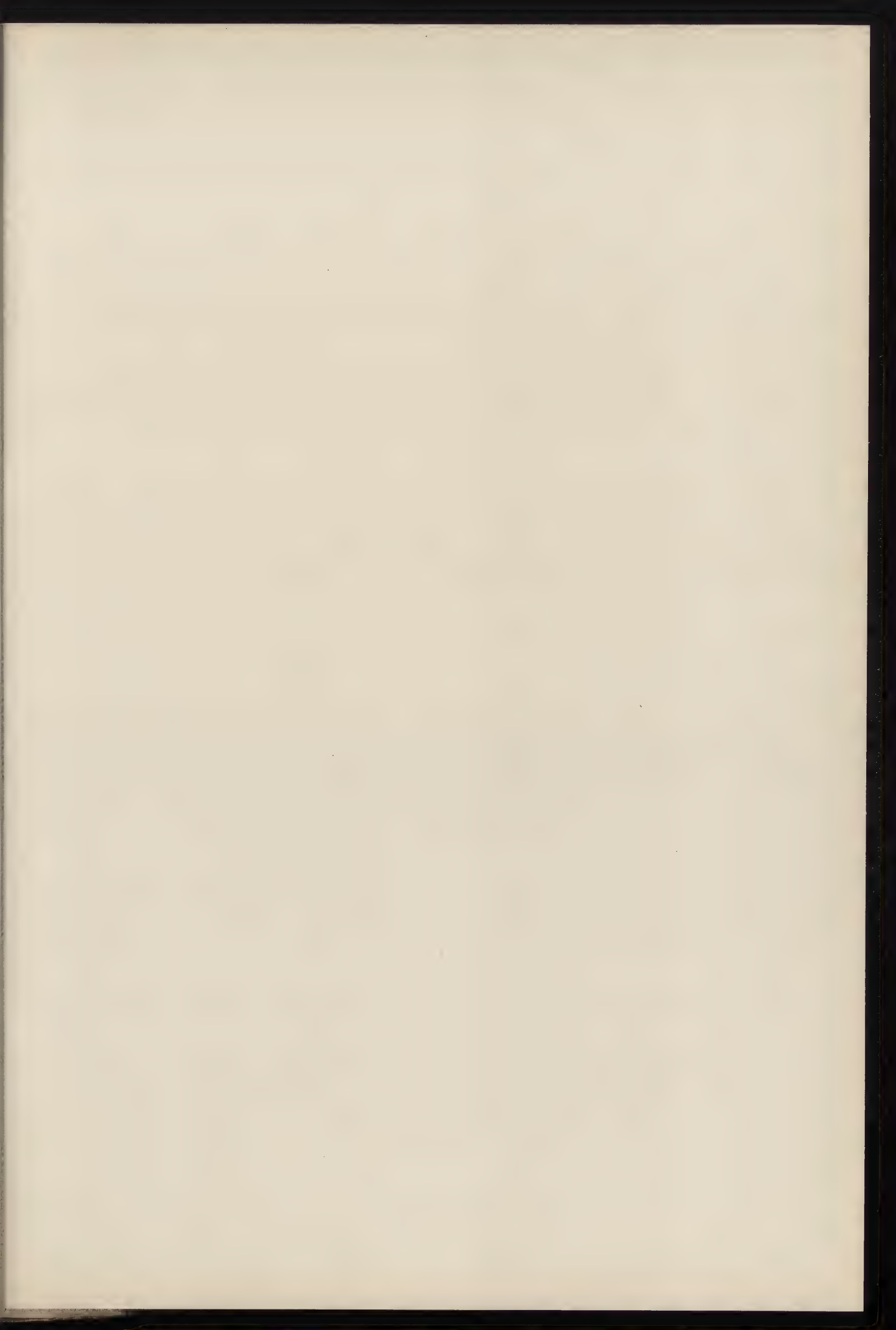
II

WHISTLER was always scrupulously dressed, ordinarily wearing a sack-coat, white shirt with turned-down collar, and white duck trousers; but on rainy days he donned trousers to match his coat. A brown felt hat completed his costume. In wearing evening dress he always omitted the tie. While one might think that this would give him an unfinished look, it did not appear so badly as it might seem. He often said, "Only Whistler would do it." He always wore an eyeglass attached to a thin black cord—very rarely spectacles,

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which served him only in close work upon etchings. When he was talking the glass was dropped. If he sat at one of the tables in the café, the clanging of the eyeglass accentuated Whistler's conversation. If he were presented to any one it was dropped, and dangled to and fro from the neat cord for a few minutes, to be readjusted after some moments of fumbling. His monocle was always a source of entertainment; one could hardly be with Whistler and not be interested in the use he made of it in conversation. Although he used it incessantly, he rarely, if ever, broke one.

He generally carried his wand, a Japanese bamboo cane, using it to emphasize his remarks, and accompanying its use by





THE BATHING-GROUND WHERE WHISTLER PRACTISED DIVING

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his customary expression, "Don't you know!" In Venice I never saw him wear a top hat, although in London he always wore one, slightly pushed back to allow the white lock to peep out from the curly black hair.

He rose early, worked strenuously, and retired late. He seemed to forget the ordinary hours for meals and would often have to be called over and over again, unfinished work frequently being taken in hand just at this time. He was a fastidious smoker, but not a continuous one. I never saw him smoke a cigar or a pipe or use any kind of tobacco other than the French. He would often stop in the middle of his work, roll a dainty cigarette of French tobacco, and smoke it. He had coffee and rolls in his room while the

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rest of us went to some neighboring café. It was the same with luncheons, except that we often lunched with him. We frequently had at these times "patate Americane," Whistler always saying, "These potatoes are very large and sweet, but the nice, golden-yellow of the real American sweet potato is lacking. Otherwise they are good."

We had muskmelons and watermelons; during the season, we bought all kinds of figs, from the little green ones to the big, red, coarse kind. Dinner was the great event of the day because usually Whistler was with us. He had the French habit of occasionally taking a glass of absinthe before this meal.

We dined at some one of the numerous restaurants that were to be found in the

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neighborhood of the piazza, afterward strolling along to the Café Quadri or to the Café Florian, where we enjoyed our coffee in the open air, listening to the music, telling stories, and watching the thousands who came and went. Among the people whom we learned to know by sight were Richard Wagner, George Eliot and her husband, Mr. Cross, Ouida, Robert Browning, Meissonier, Martin Rico, Liszt, and other celebrities.

Whistler had many friends outside of Duveneck's class of boys. Mr. Graham, an old forty-niner then resident in Venice, was a great friend, and a man whose works Whistler greatly appreciated. John Sargent he looked upon as a clever man, but had no method of gaging him as he now stands. He visited in a social

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way many houses of Americans living in Venice, and was much desired, for he had a very exceptional charm in his conversation and a wonderful power of description, so wonderful that he left a vivid impression upon the mind. His choice of words was always a marked feature, a characteristic which is admired in his writings. His manners were elegant. He could always adapt himself to any situation and, at the same time, retain his dignity and personality.

Whistler was a brilliant talker and a great debater. I shall never forget my surprise when I heard him say for the first time: "Bacher, I am not arguing with you; I am telling you." I never forgot the lesson. Later I found that he had used this effectively in one of his letters



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to the London "World," when he said: "Seriously, then, my Atlas, an etching does not depend, for its importance, upon its size. I am not arguing with you; I am telling you." He spoke French fluently, German less readily. His Italian was very good, particularly under excitement, though occasionally a French word slipped in unawares, adding to the picturesqueness. I recall that he considered Poe our greatest poet. His favorite themes were the old Venetian painters. "Canaletto," he said, "could paint a white building against a white cloud. That was enough to make any man great." He thought a great deal of Tintoretto. One day we were visiting the Scuola di San Rocco, where numerous Tintoretto's are incased high up in the

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walls. He climbed up with great difficulty, in order to get a close look at the technique of that master, and was in great glee over it, perhaps because it coincided well with his own. Paul Veronese and Titian were, in his own words, "great swells." Once or twice we spoke of the Barbizon school, and particularly of Corot. Many of his works I had seen in France, and I was enthusiastic on the subject. In speaking of certain things of Corot's, he remarked, "They 've been done before."

I objected to that, saying, "Who did them?"

"Whistler," he observed.

At the moment this struck me as a piece of whimsicality, but afterward, when I saw certain early work of Whistler's in

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Liverpool, I felt there was some basis for it.

Michelangelo he considered too much given to contortion in his masterpieces. As he recalled the figure of "Night," in the Medici Chapel, he distorted himself to illustrate his meaning. Among his sayings, I recall these: "A tree should not be painted." "You cannot paint the sun." "You cannot paint the moon." "Can you imagine any one painting the Venus de Milo?" "Paint should not be applied thick. It should be like breath on the surface of a pane of glass." He often spoke of Fantin Latour, whose work he seemed to like very much, especially his lithographs.

Once when I was at work at the Ponte del Pistor, Whistler joined me in my gon-

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dola, saying: "This is a good subject. When you find one like this you should not do it, but come and tell Whistler." I replied with some boyish retort, which he disregarded, for I always found him the most considerate as well as the most delightful, mirth-loving companion and teacher. For three days he came down with me. He talked of art and his London experiences, particularly of his trial with Ruskin. He told me all about his scheme of the Peacock Room, making sketches to illustrate how he alternated his use of blue on gold and gold on blue.

On our way home from one of these expeditions, we met a man against whom many of his bitterest shafts had been sent. I was in Whistler's gondola at the time, and, as the boats rubbed each other's

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

sides, a very pleasant conversation ensued.

"Who was the man?" I asked later.

"Oh, Quilter," he answered. "I will tell you more of him at another time."

Subsequently I found out that it was "'Arry" Quilter, of whom he spoke in "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies."

He seldom spoke of his career at West Point or in South America, but some one in Venice once told me that several years before Whistler had shipped on some kind of a fighting craft; he and the captain had fought, and Whistler came back with a black eye. Doubting the accuracy of this report, I repeated the story to him.

"Yes," he said, "I shipped to Valparaiso, and the captain and I did get

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

into some sort of a tussle. I believe I did have a black eye," he added, in a deprecating sort of way, but was careful to add that it was an honorable proceeding. He spoke of some paintings he had made in the harbor and of vessels anchored there. Since then a story came to me that several of these paintings were sold for a trifling sum, and that they had disappeared.

One day I said to him, "Jimmie, they say you fought with Seymour Haden in a Paris café, and that you got the worst of it."

"Yes," he replied, "we fought,—let me tell you about it. He got my head under his arm and began punching me in the face, and then I pushed him through the window."

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At this time in his life Whistler was not in the good financial condition in which later years found him. I have read in some account of his life that he was limited to polenta or macaroni. If he often ate these dishes it was not from necessity, but because he liked them. He used to draw some rare dry-points, pull one or two proofs upon my press, and send them to patrons of his in London upon whom he could always call when in need of funds. I was always glad to be of service to Whistler when he needed money, having been fortunate enough to assist him several times. On one occasion I loaned him ten lire, and was quite surprised and pleased to be invited to dine with him that evening. Whistler rarely ever asked the other boys for

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

money; on one occasion in returning a borrowed sum he insisted on giving me twice as much.

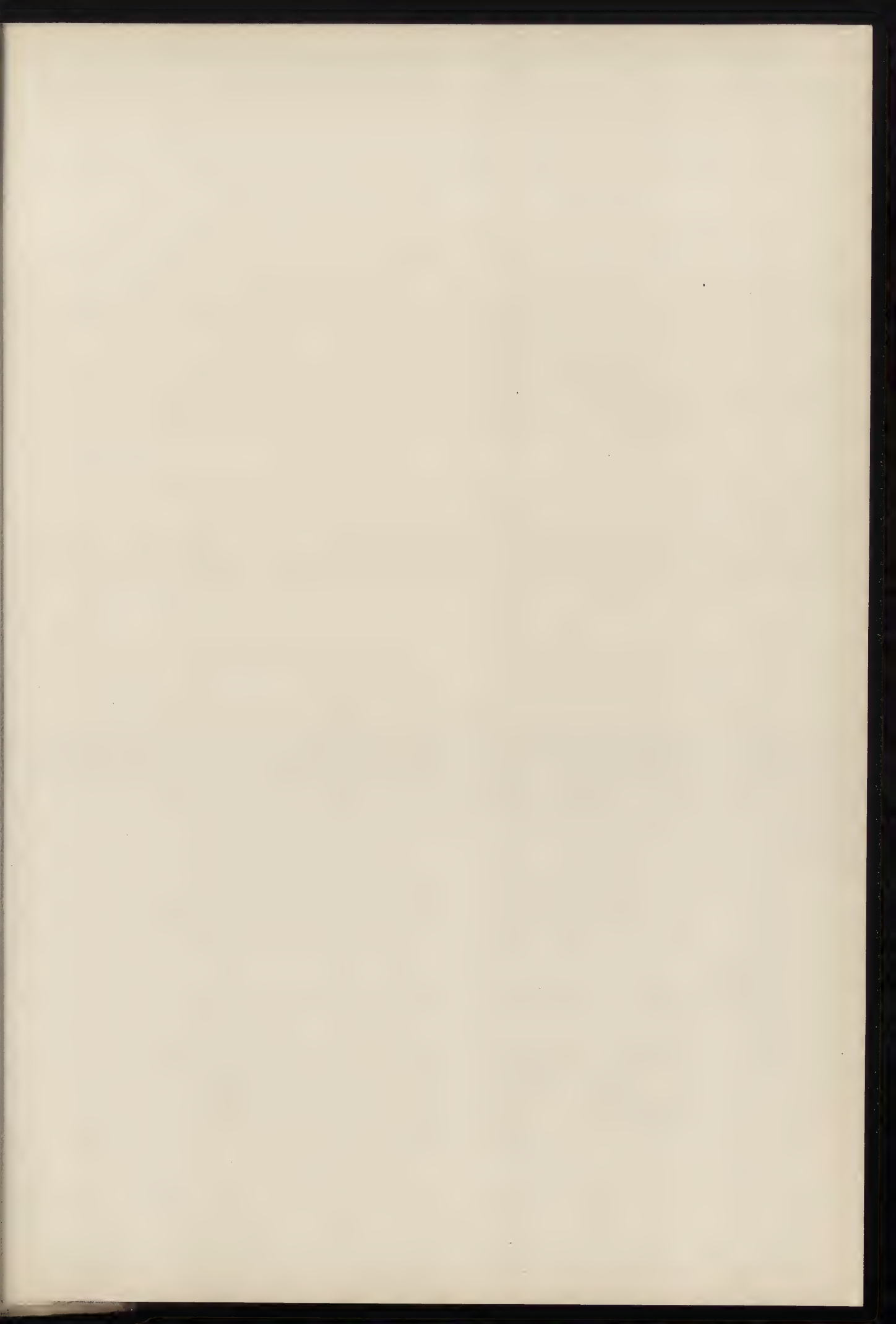
He was a prodigious worker, and led a very strenuous life, yet he succeeded in getting an immense amount of fun and good living. Age rested very lightly upon him. To my knowledge, no one knows, from his statement, his exact age. He asked me one day:

"Bacher, how old do you think I am?"

"Well," I said, "you had to be over sixteen to get into West Point; you were there two years; then you went to Paris and stayed five years."

"Yes," he said.

"Then you went to London in '59 and were there for many years. This is 1880





PONTE DEL PISTOR, A FAVORITE SPOT OF WHISTLER'S

Drawn on the old-fashioned etching ground and etched subsequently as usual. Compare with same subject on page 95, produced by Hamerton's "Positive Process."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

—you must be about forty-six years old, now.”

“Why, Bacher! You make me out an old man.” And there he ended, never letting me know whether I was right or wrong.

Our life together was intimate and pleasant. Whistler always spoke of me as one of his pupils—even as one of his favorite pupils. Of course it pleased me mightily, but I did not deserve such a title or value it at that time. There were many others who were known by this name, but I never knew the term to be applied except in an endearing way. “He was a sensitive and sensible man with definite ideas about art which he expressed with force”; but as an irritable,

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critical character, I know nothing. His sarcasm was but rarely used, and then only upon those who brought it down upon themselves. He was without fear, and the more daring the exploit the more it appealed to him. If he heard anything uncomplimentary said of himself he went directly to the individual and made him retract it or secretly wish he had not said it.

III

WHISTLER was the last of our group to leave Venice. He went to London, and from there I received several letters from him. I remained in Florence one winter, returning to Venice for a stay of a summer and winter.

Leaving Venice late in 1883, I returned to America by way of London, where I saw Whistler daily. At that time many of his most famous pictures were under way. In his studio he showed me the picture of Irving as *Philip II* of Spain. His mother's picture was finished

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at this time, and I noticed that it was painted on the back of a canvas on the face of which was the portrait of a child. My remark, "Why have you painted your mother on the back of a canvas?" received simply the reply:

"Is n't that a good surface?"

We dined together every night. Among many pleasant experiences, I remember that he took me to see a remarkable collection of Japanese embroideries. As I knew that his inspiration was from the Japanese, his enjoyment of these things was interesting to remark. After a fortnight with him, I left for Liverpool, with instructions to see a friend of his who lived there, to go to his house, and, regardless of the hour, to ask permission to see certain of Whistler's works. There



WHISTLER IN HIS TITE STREET STUDIO

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I saw six or eight of his most remarkable paintings, many of which are now owned in America.

Returning to France after two years' stay at home, I stopped again to see Whistler. On this occasion, at his request, I visited his brother, Dr. Whistler, in order to see a remarkable Japanese lacquered tray representing fish at various depths. This was the only thing saved from the sheriff's sale of his effects in the White House in Tite Street.

Just previous to this time the "Ten o'Clock Lecture,"—so called because Whistler desired to give people a chance to dine comfortably and pleasantly before coming to hear it,—had been delivered at one of the great universities, and this topic was uppermost in his mind. He

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read the lecture to me, imitating his appearance and manner in delivering it. Putting on his eyeglass, and looking severely at the imaginary audience for some moments, he began :

“ ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with great hesitation and much misgiving that I appear before you in the character of the preacher.’ ”

It was delightful to hear him read it, and amusing in the extreme to watch his mimicry.

A letter from a mutual friend told me of an incident, not mentioned by Whistler, which happened at the real delivery.

Jimmie's *conversazione* on Saturday seems to have been a success till just at the end, between twelve and one, when the men were all leaving, the attendants succeeded in pulling over the long

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

rows of shelves with all the hats and coats, mixing up the whole lot and losing all the numbers!! There were fifteen hundred invitations issued!!!

Whistler felt very keenly Mr. Swinburne's attitude toward his Ten o'Clock. It was ever a disappointment to him, for they were friends. He read to me the letter to Swinburne in which he so cleverly expressed his feeling. Taking down a copy of it from over the mantelpiece where he kept many of his letters in his Tite Street studio, he read this particular passage:

Who are you, deserting your Muse, that you should insult my Goddess with familiarity, and the manner of approach common to the reasoners in the market place. "Hearken to me," you cry, "and I will point out how this man who has passed his life in her worship, is a tumbler and a clown of the booths—how he who has produced

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

that which I fain must acknowledge—is a jester in the ring!”

He read me more of the letter, showing considerable resentment, walking up and down the room, emphasizing certain passages with great feeling and even bitterness. This passage he read slowly and seemed to enjoy it particularly:

That he should so stray about blindly in his brother's flower garden and bruise himself.

As I was about to leave for Paris, Whistler wrote the following in my notebook: Call on Mr. George Lucas [21] or 41 Rue de l'Arc de Triomphe. Ask him to let me know at once what would be the best hall in Paris for the “10 o’Clock.” He said: “Present yourself, and give him Whistler’s compliments and this letter, which will introduce you.

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Tell him about me and the works that you have seen, and what you have heard about the 'Ten o'Clock.' Tell him Whistler is thinking of giving the 'Ten o'Clock' in Paris. He will write me; but you must write me, also, as soon as you get home, and tell me what he said."

I called on Mr. Lucas and he advised a certain hall, the name of which has escaped me. That was the last that I ever heard of it; but I know that Whistler never gave the lecture in Paris. Why, I do not know.

I was on the continent for two years, and received several letters from Whistler, through one of which I made the acquaintance of Tom R. Way, whose catalogue of Whistler's lithographs is the recognized authority.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Returning to London in 1886, I saw Whistler for the last time. I dined with him and Tom Way, and was pleasantly entertained. So ended one of the best acquaintances of my life.

IV

WHISTLER was a master spirit in "the science of the Beautiful," as he defined art. It was the one subject upon which he would allow no jesting. Whatever medium he selected, whether a creation on canvas from memory, a painting from nature in oils, a water-color,—pure or a gouache,—it was fascinating to the full limits of his medium. In pastels, composition and color surprises dominated, remaining in the memory as the down of many-colored butterflies. Lithography was a commercially debased art before Whistler

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forced the grease-crayon into a higher standard of beauty than it had ever attained before. If mural painting was his task, his tints glowed as if his brush had been dipped in rainbow hues. In his etchings, he spun weblike lines of exquisite beauty. If an exhibition hall was to be transformed with drapery, he made it like the brilliancy of the sunshine. Apart from his art, if he laid aside his brush to take up the pen, he was no less competent. His influence on the press was always effective. In courts of law he established a prestige and dignity for the artist and art that cannot be undervalued.

Every subject had some problem in nature which he wished to convey on canvas, a copperplate, or by pastel. Prob-



NOCTURNAL NOTE—CRAYON DRAWING



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

lems in art he loved to solve. He had many mediums always at hand, and the genius to select the proper one. When he made a journey, even for a day, he took with him materials for every emergency. If a copperplate, it was grounded ready to etch upon. His pastels he always carried in his gondola, but rarely his oils when on a sketching expedition.

While in Venice he executed very few paintings, and those mostly from memory. Of this class, the "Nocturne in Blue" had St. Mark's beautifully suggested in the background, with flickering gas-jets in the foreground; another was a scene from a café near the Royal Gardens. Night after night he watched the gondolas pass, singly and in groups, with lanterns waving in the darkness, without making a

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stroke with brush or pen. Then he would return to his rooms and paint the scene, or as much as he could remember, going again and again to refresh some particular impression. The canvas was a wonderful record. The gondolas could be faintly seen in the darkness, the only light spots being the white-clothed gondoliers and the flickering lights and reflections.

Another painting made in Venice was from a window of the Casa Jankovitz, representing the Salute and a great deal of sky and water, with the buildings very small. He drew the latter in pen and ink, and worked over them for days, until their exquisite details were well defined. The clouds which appeared day after day were drawn in pastels, and on

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these he labored until their forms were satisfactory. Then he took a big brush, mixed a general tone, and drew it across the buildings, next applying a general tone for the water. The sky was painted a blue which was carefully applied around the forms of the huge, white clouds. The finished picture looked so simple that, unless one had seen the process, he would have thought it the work of one sitting. One criticism only was expressed: it was much lower in tone than nature.

He ground his colors in a special medium of his own upon a large surface of plate glass, using a palette-knife to mix tints that looked like tints in a new box of pastels. His object was to produce tones for general purposes. When this

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

was accomplished, the mixture was put into large, collapsible tubes, in readiness for future wants. Thus Whistler produced "morning pavement," as well as "evening pavement," "morning sky," and "pavement shadow," and many others. When at work with these he produced much with little apparent effort. They were thinner and easier to spread on the canvas than the usual colors bought in the market.

Although Whistler did not care for music, he made use of his technical knowledge for themes. "Symphony in Gray and Green," "Variations in Blue and Green," "Nocturne: Opal and Silver," "Arrangement in Black and Brown," are examples of this particular trait. His most ambitious desire was to paint a grand concerto-like picture with

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the title "Full Palette"—"just as in music," he explained, "when they employ all the instruments they make it 'Full Band.' If I can find the right kind of thing I will produce a harmony in color corresponding to Beethoven's harmonies in sound."

"Poor pictures should not be linked to suggestive titles," Whistler once said. In speaking of some pictures that were poor in paint and good in titles, he remarked that the titles were more valuable than the paintings. This was a very *apropos* remark, for in about the year 1880, the subject-picture was much in vogue, and these ideas had drifted into the art thought of Venice. Every worker in the schools had a supreme subject for oils. It was considered the height of art to select the subject first and then make

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the painting fit it. Such paintings, while having artistic merit, were more often valuable because of some historic interest rather than as art.

Whistler was absolutely opposed to these theories and never painted subject-pictures. He preferred nature and wished the artist to be free to impart what he saw there. If the spectator had been fortunate enough to have seen it, or was able to appreciate it, well and good. This, of course, was the exact opposite of the story-picture, but Whistler believed it, lived it, and preached it wherever he went. He often talked over his ideas with me, many of these arguments appearing later in his "Gentle Art of Making Enemies" under the title of "The Red Rag."

V.

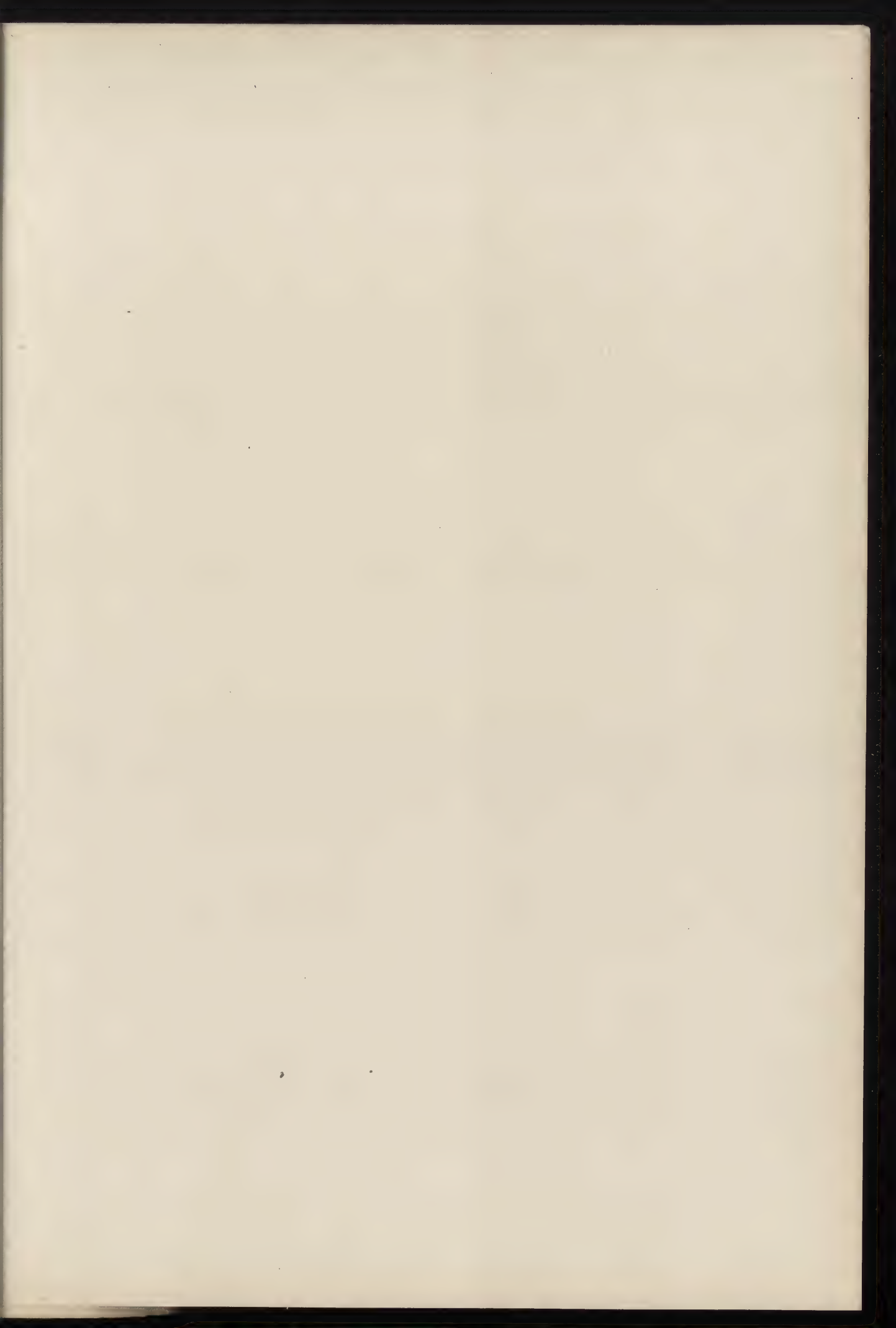
WHISTLER never carried an easel during the year he was in Venice, always borrowing one when using oils. When he put down a brush stroke, it was positive, its purpose revealed as other strokes were added. The strokes of a large brush drawn across the canvas were as surprisingly frank as those of a small pointed brush; his use of both would often induce a smile because of the simplicity.

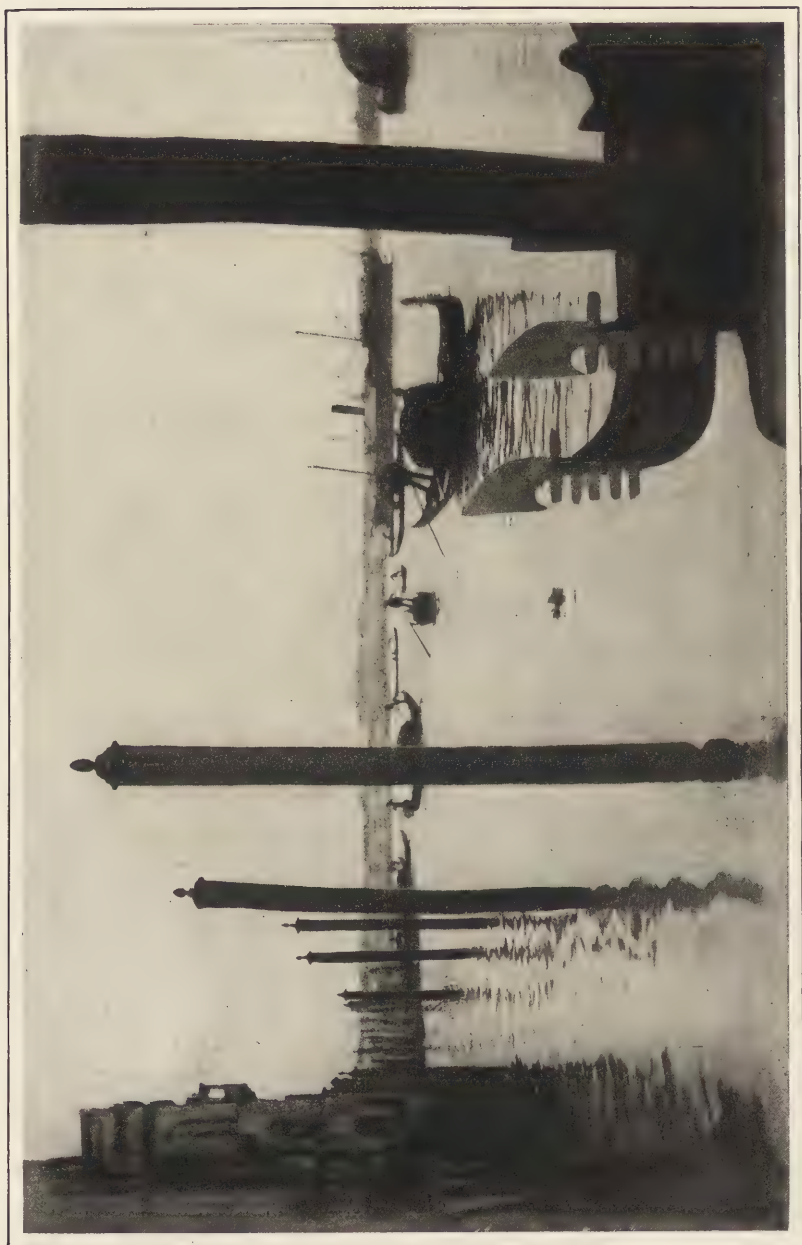
In painting, each tone was placed surely and sharply with no blending or accidental effects. A succession of acci-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

dental effects, well put together to form a picture was a kind of art Whistler never tolerated. He was very severe in his disapproval of this kind of work. Tones and colors were so beautifully adjusted that they needed no artificial aid to blend them. His wonderful effects were generally reached by his delicate mixing and frank application. He used a flat brush that he had cut down on the sides, leaving the long hairs in a sharp line in the center. They resembled old, well-used brushes—not the clean, sharp ones of the ordinary artist. In portrait work, he employed very long handled brushes, especially made for his use. His management of these brushes was most remarkable in this delicate work.

His method of painting a life-sized





LOOKING ACROSS THE GRAND CANAL FROM THE SALUTE

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

portrait from a model seemed rational but very unusual—in fact, it was quite his own. The background for the sitter was generally a piece of cheese-cloth hung over a Japanese screen with the ends dangling to the floor. He had many exquisite tints from which to select the proper type or color which the sitter required. The canvas, with space large enough to allow a margin of a foot above and below the figure, was placed next to the model. Standing about fifteen or twenty feet from both, Whistler mixed his colors upon a table palette of his own design which he could move from place to place. Whistler's table palette resembled an old-fashioned desk with slanting top of polished mahogany. Around the sides on the top were spaces

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for tube colors and mediums. With a brushful of paint, he walked to the canvas, made a single stroke much as one would with a rapier, returned, compared his subject and work, and mixed another brushful. Stroke after stroke he applied in this way until the picture satisfied him. His mounted canvases were generally taller than the standing, full-grown figure.

In his painting, it was surprising to see how much he would accomplish in a short time. He would decide upon a local general tone, putting it on with five or six big strokes; any variation of tones would be added in the same way. As a general rule, he never worked over a former brush stroke.

If one saw Whistler at work from na-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ture, he would be surprised at the ability he displayed in quickly grasping the essential facts and placing them upon the canvas. In a given time, he could put down more facts than any other man I ever knew. He was delightful and simple in composition, piquant in point of view. A proper medium for tones and tints, brush, canvas, and subject had to be in accord for him to produce that unknown thing called a masterpiece.

In the picture of Whistler's mother, the marvelous detail in the mixing of color and the harmony of tones to those in nature is fascinating. The colors for the embroidery upon the Japanese curtain were mixed separately and applied by single brush strokes. The shadows under the chair are so delicate and diffused that

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they are even more striking than the portraiture.

Whistler tried many experiments with canvas, paints, color tubes of tints with surprising results. Very often some strange work turned out to be an experiment. His picture of Sir Henry Irving as *Philip II* of Spain was painted in oil, but the paint was applied in such a manner that it had the appearance of water-colors. At this time, it did not seem to me equal to many of his other efforts. In all probability this picture was the subject of one of his many experiments.

One morning Whistler carefully explained to me his theories of value in painting. He told me to look at my model—get the color of the face to the edge—then be very careful to see what is

NOCTURNE





WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

next to that edge in the background, and apply that accurately.

"If you do that all around the figure, your values will be right," said he. "Remember that the model is your main subject,—what is back of it you must get very accurately."

It was a good lesson that I received early in life. The accuracy of his backgrounds in lines and color was always perfect. He was most careful to get in color the exact distance of the model from the background. In criticizing he always looked first to the values. He was a splendid teacher in this application of paint. If persons understood him they were fortunate; if not, they probably considered the criticism in a bad light.

Whistler was a great admirer of Velas-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

quez and his method in painting. He considered him a great authority, and always looked for his pictures in every gallery he entered. He once told me a very funny story of Rubens when ambassador from Holland to the court of Spain. After presenting his credentials to Philip II and showing him his paintings, Philip remarked that he would show him his own artist. He beckoned him to a place where he opened a private door that led into Velasquez's studio. Whistler stopped and said dramatically:

"Can't you imagine Rubens's surprise when he saw the work of that great master?"

Whistler had some of his so-called propositions printed and distributed among his friends long before they were

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embodied in the "Gentle Art of Making Enemies." He gave me the "Propositions No. 2," printed on a rather large, stiff cardboard. They were often quoted by him to the men when in Venice. His favorites were these:

A picture is finished when all trace of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared.

The work of the Master reeks not of the sweat of the brow—suggests no effort, and is finished from its beginning.

The Masterpiece should appear as the flower to the painter—perfect in its bud as in its bloom—with no reason to explain its presence—no mission to fulfil.

VI

OILS were a secondary medium with Whistler while in Venice, his main object being to complete his etchings and to get subjects and results as quickly as possible for his exhibition on his return to London. He would load his gondola, which was virtually his studio, with materials, and the old gondolier would take him to his various sketching points. It is noticeable in Venice that many subjects were pastel motives, and Whistler was very clever in deciding which these were. He generally selected bits of strange architecture, win-

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dows, piles, balconies, queer water effects, canal views with boats—very rarely figure subjects—always little artistic views that would not be complete in any other medium. He always carried two boxes of pastels, an older one for instant use, filled with little bits of strange, broken colors of which he was very fond, and a newer box with which he did his principal work. He had quantities of vari-colored papers, browns, reds, grays, uniform in size.

In beginning a pastel he drew his subject crisply and carefully in outline with black crayon upon one of these sheets of tinted paper which fitted the general color of the motive. A few touches with sky-tinted pastels, corresponding to nature, produced a remarkable effect, with

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

touches of reds, grays, and yellows for the buildings here and there. The reflections of the sky and houses upon the water finished the work. At all times he placed the pastels between leaves of silver-coated paper. Even his slightest notes and sketches were treated with the greatest care and respect.

He was never in a hurry in his work, always careful, and accomplished much. Some motives were finished at one sitting, but more often he made only the crayon outline, charming in its effect, leaving the unfinished sketch for days at its most fascinating point, to be filled in later with the pastels. Many times these outlines needed very little color to complete them. At other times, he would take an old pastel which had been cast

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aside, and, by adding some new strokes, bring it into a beautiful creation. Skies with atmospheric effects beside the hard architectural lines were very charming, the reflections in water always delightful. They reminded you of color but not paint. Taken as a whole, the pastels are as complete a collection of pictures of Venice and its life as can be found.

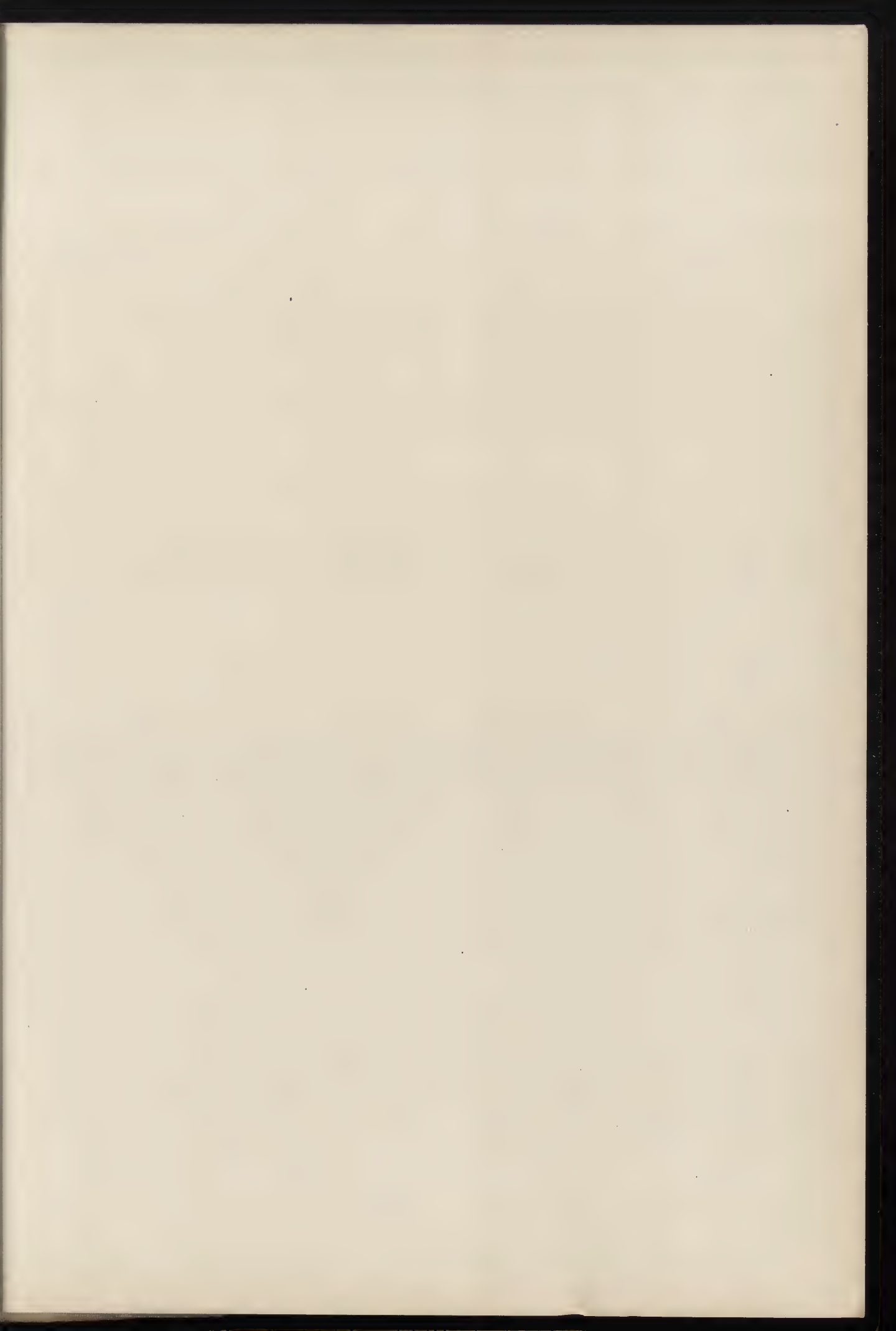
Whistler produced about one hundred pastels while in Venice, never had any framed, and very rarely showed them to strangers for fear of the rubbing which this would entail. He sold very few while there—then, only to patrons and well-known families. The majority were carried to London where they at once became popular.

Whistler lifted pastels from the com-

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monplace to a very artistic medium. Before his work, pastels were not looked upon as a factor in art, with the notable exception of the Chocolate Girl and a few charming portraits done by Frenchmen. It was really left to Whistler to inspire future artists to use this medium as a rapid record of facts. Whistler retained his interest in pastels, carrying on the work in London where he executed many classical figures.

After Horsley, in London, had condemned the nude in art, Whistler sent to an exhibition three pastels under the titles of "Harmony," "Caprice," and "Note," which the critics had described as charmingly chaste, and beneath one of them he wrote "Horsley, honi soit qui mal y pense." Whistler in describing these pastels to me, spoke of W. W. Story, the





A SYMPHONY

Caricature of Whistler from "Vanity Fair"

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sculptor, whose criticism seemed to please him very much. Story had said, "Whistler, they are as charming and complete as a Tanagra statue!"

Whistler did no lithographs in Venice. It was after his return to London that he began to work on stone. Few men of importance had taken up this medium because it was considered one of reproduction, not creation. It remained for him to make it original and creative, and to surprise the world with his work.

While in Venice he referred at times to a lithographic caricature of himself by Spy, marked "A Symphony," which had been published in "Vanity Fair" in January, 1878. He seemed very fond of it and promised to send me a copy. After leaving Venice I went to Florence, receiving, while there, the promised print.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Why it interested him I never could understand. It never seemed especially characteristic; probably it was the process involved which most appealed to him.

Thomas Way, his old friend, influenced him to experiment in this medium of artistic expression—a medium which seemed specially suited to his temperament, being as sympathetic as pencil or charcoal. His first attempts to excite interest in this art appeared to meet with but indifferent success. Of recent years lithography had become so purely a commercial product and so fallen in reputation as an art medium that time was needed to bring about its successful revival, even though hastened by the master hand of Whistler himself.

Perhaps, also, the slight, sketchy char-

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acter of many of his lithographs were suggestive chiefly of an artist's note-book—priceless to an artist, but too incomplete to satisfy the larger audience of Whistler admirers.

Mr. Way was the owner of a lithographic establishment near the Strand in London where he and his son were engaged in the business. My first acquaintance with the Ways was made through Whistler, who wrote me while I was in Paris asking me to look up young Tom Way, who was going there to study painting. He spoke of him affectionately as the son of a very old friend of his; and naturally I assured the writer that it would be my pleasure to serve him.

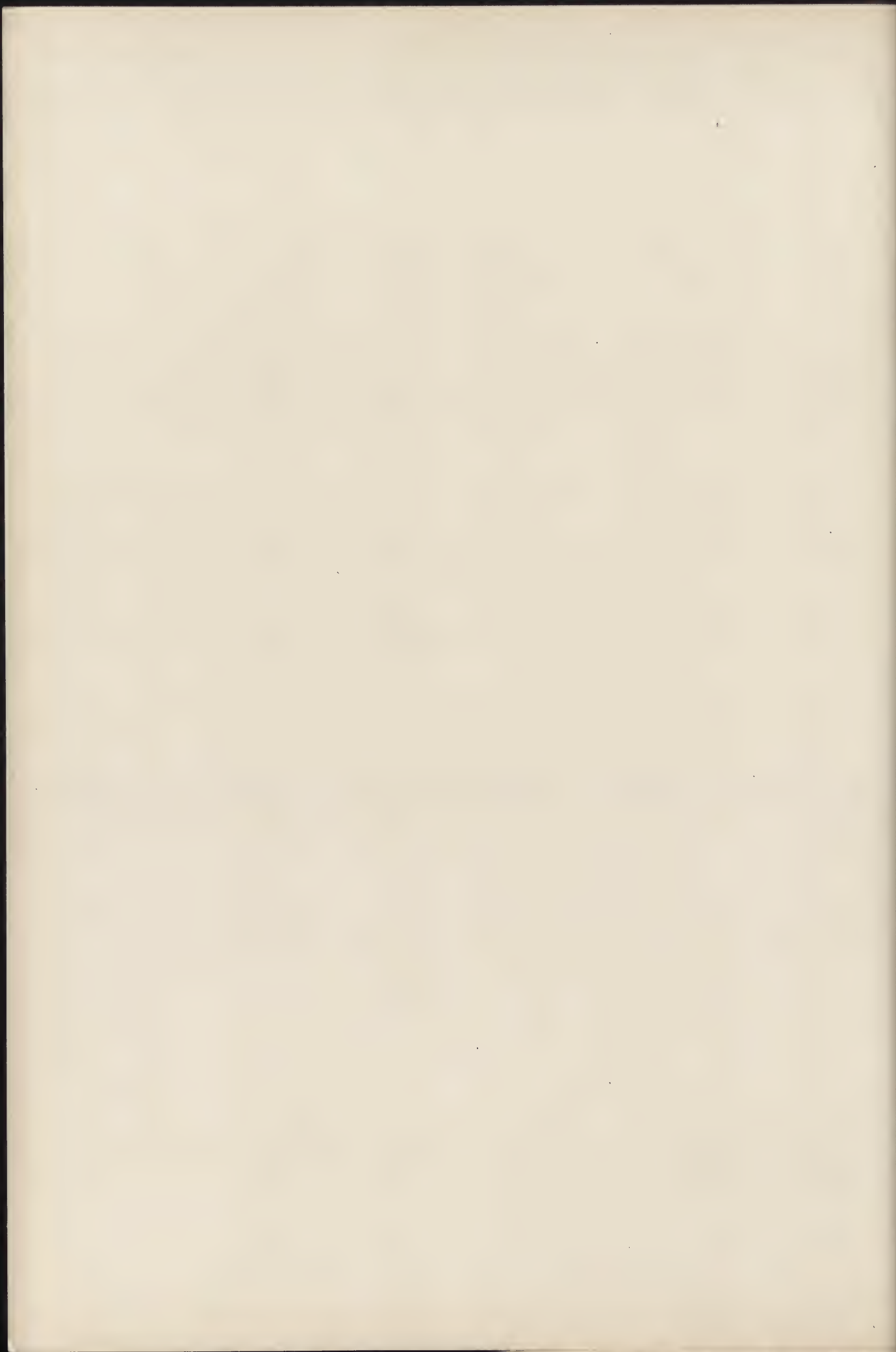
I met the younger Mr. Way, and he was with me one winter studying art in

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the Julian School. This was in 1886, and although during that time he never mentioned lithography in connection with Whistler, on our way home to London in the latter part of that same year, he showed me three original Whistler lithographs of scenes on the Thames. One was a view of an old shipyard with its broken-down buildings and scattered pieces of lumber, a large barge floating down the river with an indication of two figures on its deck. This print was particularly forcible in sky, water, and buildings. Another was a beautiful example of lithography showing buildings and chimneys vaguely seen on the banks of the river, through the atmospheric effects of which the artist was so fond. This one was done largely with some form of



LIMEHOUSE.



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

lithographic ink applied with a brush, in contrast to the usual method with a crayon. The lights were scratched out. The third was a view looking down the river from one bridge to another. As in the former, the whites on one of the small figures in the foreground were obtained by scratching out the blacks. Delicacy in application and lack of definition made this one particularly charming. On each, the butterfly is seen in a curious form because it is rendered in a new medium.

Whistler made many lithographs in London, some on stone, and others on process paper. He was an experimenter in this, as in other fields of art. His extreme facility and happy choice of subjects in this medium obtained results never before reached. The details of his

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work may be found in the admirable book by Way, whose father's printing retained, no doubt, all the beauties which the artist sought to convey.

VII

MR. F. SEYMOUR HADEN once said in London to a friend of mine, "Were I to lose any of my collection of etchings, I would rather lose my Rembrandts than my Whistlers." This remark from "an artist of rare endowment and consummate practical skill" exemplifies Whistler's position in this field of art. He was instinctively an etcher, and worked all his life upon copper, handling the needle as though it were a perfectly natural means of expression.

In his youth, while in the employ of

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the United States government, he executed some figures on a chart which have an accuracy of portrayal with the etching-needle that is as surprising as it is definite in small details. The work of his later life is a natural evolution of the characteristics displayed in this early work.

In the late '70's, he was commissioned by the Fine Arts Society of London to execute a set of twelve etchings of Venice, and it was there that I became intimately associated with him and his work in etching. My keen interest was due to the fact that I had made many etchings myself. Whistler seemed to be interested in them, especially so when I told him that some were done in one sitting while others were accomplished in eight, using the

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acid while I worked. Perhaps another bond of interest was the fact that I had studied his works and enthusiastically searched for the subjects depicted in his etchings on the Thames. London had furnished tall towers and old chimneys, tattered, broken-down houses, long distances, picturesque wharves, and generally etchable subjects. In contrast to this, Venice had a wealth of color and the finished beauty of Byzantine architecture, none of which seemed to me appropriate for the needle. Venice had never before been etched, and I was more than anxious to see how he would treat it in lines.

There was a simple artisan in Venice whose work upon copper was most beautiful. He could hammer out and grind

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down a plate to just the thinness which Whistler desired. When not at work on his plates, he devoted his time to pots, kettles, and the usual things to be found in a Venetian copper shop. He was well trained, delivered his own goods, was reasonable in his prices—hence all of our plates were made by him. In grounding these plates, Whistler always used the old-fashioned ground composed of white wax, bitumen pitch, and resin. He heated the plate with an ordinary alcohol flame, holding the copper in a small hand-vice brought with him from England. The silk-covered dabber that spreads the ground over the plate was fascinatingly managed by Whistler, who seemed to love every phase of etching. When he came to smoking the plate, he

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

preferred the old wax taper made for that purpose. He did not like to use the large torchlight wick and coal-oil lamp which I had, although it was surer and better. Later I generally grounded his plates because he learned to like my wax better than his own. It was the ground that bears Rembrandt's name, and is composed of thirty grains of white wax, fifteen grains of gum mastic and fifteen grains of asphaltum or amber. The mastic and asphaltum were pounded separately in a mortar; the wax was melted in an earthen pot, and the other ingredients were added little by little, the operator stirring all the time.

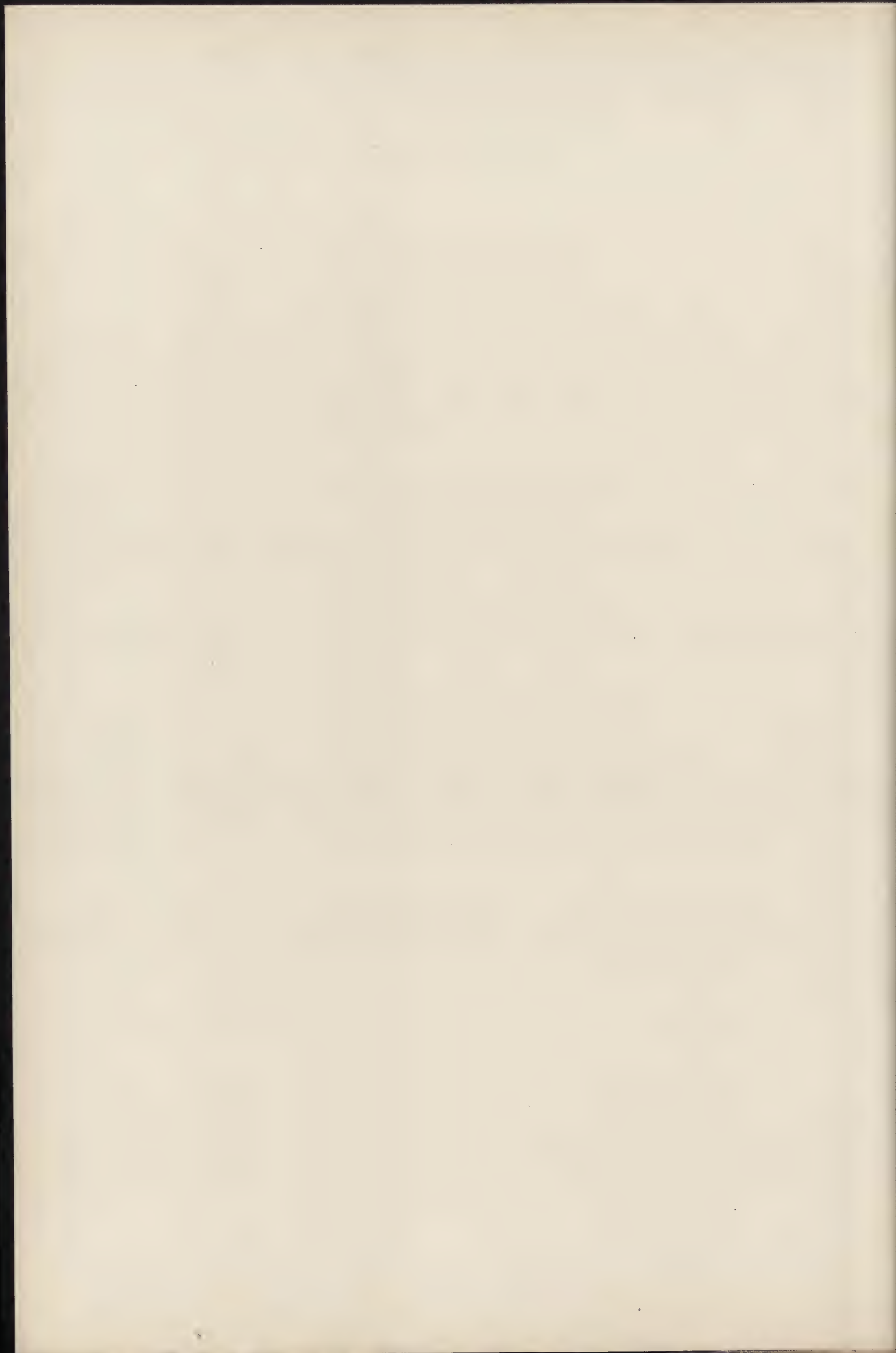
These grounded plates he would put between the leaves of a book to prevent them from being scratched, and leave

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them in the bottom of the boat. If he did much walking he took but a single plate wrapped in paper to preserve the etching ground surface, putting it in his pocket with one or two etching-needles that were always punched into a cork to secure their very fine, sharp points; and they were very sharp—every one of them. These etching-needles were ordinary dentist's tools that he had procured before coming to Venice. If a point was not as sharp as he desired, he whetted it on a small oilstone which he always carried with him—point forward, pushing forward and backward the length of the small stone until it was of a desired sharpness. The sharpening of an etching-needle is quite a knack. He could keep a point for a long time. Occa-



PONTE DEL PISTOR, A FAVORITE SPOT OF WHISTLER'S
This was produced by the method known as Hamerton's "Positive Process "



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

sionally he took only a clean copper-plate, expecting to do a dry-point.

His gondolier, Cavaldoro, a very handsome type of man, was hired by Whistler by the month, and came to know with his Italian intuition just where Whistler most desired to go. If he did not ride, he would follow his master, carrying the paraphernalia under his arm. All of Whistler's etchings of Venice were drawn right from the subject, and all the figures in these etchings were drawn from life, although some of them did not pose in the same spot in nature as they are represented as posing in the etchings; these figures were always done from life and out of doors, and often near his house. Groups of bead-stringers and lace-makers could be found almost every

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

day in any of the "calles" of Venice. Whistler often worked from these groups of women as they worked daily at their vocation.

I have known him to begin an etching as early as seven o'clock in the morning, and continue until nine, then put that plate aside, and take up another until twelve—noon—get a bite of lunch, and commence on a third, sometimes an etching or perhaps a pastel—then take a fourth—his final subject for the day, and continue upon it until dusk, the subjects being wholly different. Whistler always had a half dozen under way, more or less complete.

I have heard it said that he surrounded his etching expeditions with a great deal of mystery, and was rarely prevailed

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

upon to allow any one to accompany him, doing so, only under the strictest pledge of secrecy. This statement is absolutely incorrect, the reverse being the actual truth.

My early etchings of Venice, taken from the window in the Casa Jankovitz, were etched from nature in the acid bath, this method being known to the etching world as "Hamerton's Positive Process."¹ I had used this in Germany, but in Venice I found it impracticable because of the many details in the buildings, some of which would be over-bitten at one side

¹ In this, a white wax ground is used on the silvered surface of the copper plate and the drawing through the wax made while the plate is immersed in the acid. As fast as the metal surface is laid bare by the etching needle a black line is bitten by the acid and progress is therefore immediately apparent. The plate is never retouched after this first drawing and etching.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

and under-bitten on the other. Whistler seemed to be very little interested in this method, and I soon came to use his method—the old process, drawing the subject leisurely in one to a dozen sittings and biting the plate indoors, away from the subject.

In etching he would get the essential lines, holding the copperplate in one hand, generally the left, and with the other “he spun web-like lines of exquisite beauty—fascinating to see in the beginning as in the end.” Where it required accuracy he was minute. He used the needle with the ease of the draughtsman with a pen. He grouped his lines in an easy, playful way that was fascinating: they would often group themselves as tones, a difficult thing to get in an etch-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ing. He used the line and dot in all its phases with ease and certainty. Sometimes the lines formed a dark shadow of a passage through a house with figures in the darkness so beautifully drawn that they looked far away from the spectator. These shadows which so beautifully defined darkness were made only by many lines carefully welded together and made vague as the shadow became faint in the distance or was contrasted with some light object.

He made his etched lines feel like air against solids; that is the impression some of his rich doorways of Venice gave me. He was the first to show me how to etch a deep, variegated door with a deeper figure somewhere in that darkness, all contrasted against something in the

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near opening that was much darker and which made the doorway effective. If he etched a doorway, he played with the lines and allowed them to jumble themselves into beautiful forms and contrasts, but was always very careful of the general direction they should run as a whole. In the partial darkness he could put in a hazy figure, the values being adjusted by the biting. He worked for hours on figures, and at times became quite excited over some success attained after much painstaking labor.

"Look at this figure!" he excitedly yelled to me one day on the Riva. "See how well he stands!"

Whistler never cared to draw an old gondola as Ziem and others had done. He preferred to depict the beautiful new

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ones, the lines of which he considered "very swell." He would often remark while drawing one, "Does n't this gondola sit in the water like a swan?"

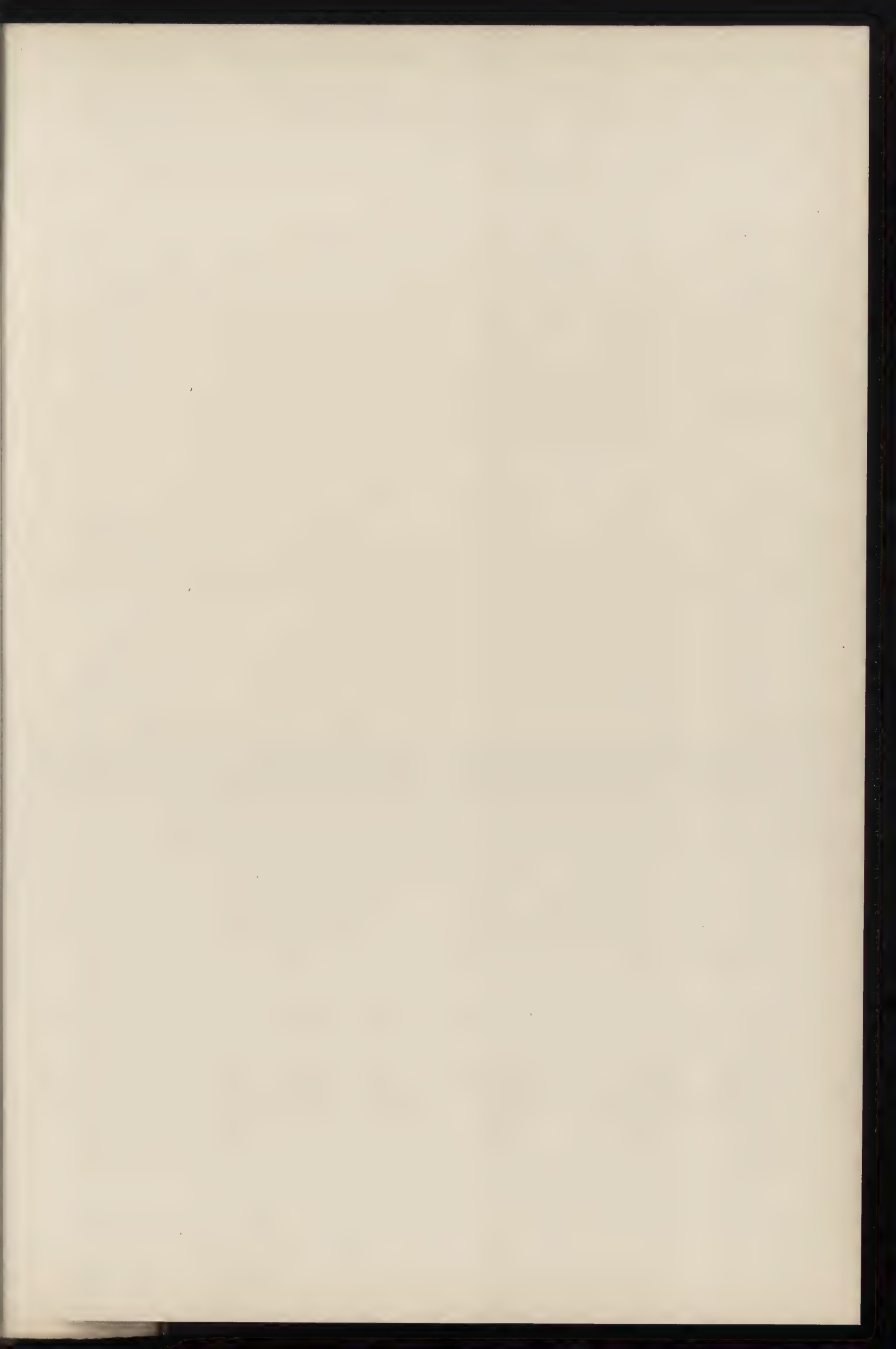
Whistler had no doctrine about lines, although Haden had, and expressed them in his published work on etching. All the theory Whistler hinted at was delicacy of biting, of printing, and of dry-point. Delicacy seemed to him the keynote of everything, carrying more fully than anything else his use of the suggestion of tenderness, neatness, and nicety.

I have been asked by several collectors if it were not true that Whistler worked all his Venetian plates through a mirror, thereby avoiding the usual reversing of the subject. My answer was always an emphatic "No." All of Whistler's etch-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ings of Venice are reversed, although that fact never offended one's appreciation of them. To see the prints as the subjects are in nature they must be seen through a mirror.

A traditional saying among etchers is that "one day's stopping-out is worth five with the needle." Whistler always had his stopping-out varnish with him in a small bottle, applying it with a brush in the most delicate manner. Whistler had brought some from England which was soon exhausted, and, as the proper kind could not be obtained in Venice it became necessary for me to make some for the use of both of us. This was done by mixing asphaltum varnish, a piece of old etching ground, white wax, and ether. While he was working, although he avoided the





EARLY MORNING

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

use of the varnish as much as possible, if it became necessary for him to stop out part of the work, he would paint out any lines or figures, replacing the old forms with better lines.

In the "Etcher's Handbook" by Hamerton, which I had with me in Venice for reference, there are described several processes for biting, but Whistler, although he read many of them, had no use for them, preferring the old process, or, as Hamerton calls it, the old negative process.

A well-known dealer in etchings and a writer on the subject, once asked me if it was not true that Whistler allowed anybody to bite his plates. My answer was, "No—never! any more than Whistler would allow anybody to write his letters

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

or sign his butterfly. Aside from the horror of such a thing the pleasure would be gone." When he bit a plate he put it on the corner of a kitchen table with his retouching varnish, etching-needle, feathers and bottle of nitric acid at hand ready for instant use. Taking a feather he would place it at the mouth of the bottle of nitric acid, tipping the bottle and allowing the acid to run down the feather and drop upon the plate. He moved the bottle and feather always in the same position around the edge until the plate was covered. He would use the feather continuously to swash the acid backward and forward upon the plate, keeping all parts equally well covered, now and then blowing upon some place where an air bubble had formed. If he desired to

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

make any change on some particular spot, he would blow away the acid, make the desired change, and re-cover with the feather. When the plate was properly bitten in this particular state, he would pull it to the edge of the table and drain the acid into the bottle again by placing the feather at the edge, holding it there until every drop had disappeared. Whistler never banked his plate, and he could bite it to the very edge without spilling a drop of the fluid. This method in the use of the acid was peculiar to Whistler; the skill which he displayed was astonishing.

When the plate was dry and clear, he looked sharply over it with a magnifying-glass for accidental scratches that would expose the surface of the plate in any

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

future work upon it. He was most careful in detecting these as well as small bits of false biting or pits, which, on rare occasions, despite all his care, he found on the surface of the plate. I once remember telling Whistler that the use of Seymour Haden's acid, sometimes called Dutch Mordant, had a tendency to obviate these defects because of the small bit of potash in its composition, but Whistler would not use this acid, preferring to stick to the nitric diluted with water. In his biting, Whistler carried lines into intricate deeper bitings that could be carefully followed with the eye—into complexities of a shadow or the depths of a doorway.

VIII

THE most interesting part of his etching was the printing. If he wanted a proof from a plate in a certain state, his method of work was a revelation in the art, particularly the care with which he used the "dabber." When squashing the ink into the shallow lines and moving the hot plate over the surface of the plate-heater, he surely but gently forced in the ink from every side, rough-wiping neatly with muslin. When the plate was sufficiently chilled for manipulating, he used that remarkable hand of his to wipe the ink away in the

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

daintiest manner imaginable. His hand would glide over the smudgy copper surface in light, quick strokes—*pit-pat-pat*—that fairly cut away the stiff ink that stuck fast in the palm. Buttoned close around his neck he wore a blouse that had seen service before. There was one large smudge on the right side that had layer upon layer of dry ink. In the same *pit-pat* regularity he wiped the ink from his hand on the same old smudge until the plate was ready for the press.

One of the many charms of his etchings is the delicacy of "biting." In some of his plates the lines are bitten so shallow that only with the greatest care and knowledge is it possible to retain the ink in them.

The method of printing his own plates

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

was as much a part of his art as was the needle or the acid. From these delicate plates he could "pull" a proof so rich and full that it would surprise most etchers to see how much ink he got from those tiny, weblike scratches, some of them so faint that they could barely be seen when the polished surface was held to the light. These plates would baffle an ordinary printer, who would probably cast them aside as unprintable and worthless.

All of Whistler's proofs were printed on my press, some plates being so large that the paper had to be folded in order to get it through. If he wished to make a large edition without the folding of the paper, he carried his plates to the old Venetian printer who had two wooden presses well equipped for this purpose.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

This old man kept his shop in one of the back streets of Venice, where he and his sister, a very old lady, did small Madonnas for the churches and told agreeable stories of the occupation of Venice by Napoleon, the facts of which they remembered well. He had inks for engraving, but I supplied him with etching inks brought from Germany.

In this shop Whistler became the workman, the old man, with his slow and hobbling walk, helping him by preparing the press and adjusting the blankets. After the windlass had pulled the big bed through, Whistler would carefully pull the proof from the plate, place it upon a cardboard, and examine every detail, comparing every line with the corresponding line upon the plate.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

He often took a proof and went back to the subject to make corrections upon it with water-colors that matched the ink. Then he carried home the corrected print, recoated his plate, and worked it up to the recent proof. Sometimes he corrected a proof in water-color without going to nature to verify his results.

During the first of his printing, Whistler did not trim down the print to the plate mark; later, and in his London printing from the Venetian plates, he did this, leaving his butterfly in one corner in a little square of its own. He held the *remarque* in contempt—never placing it on any of his work.

The early prints from some of Whistler's Venetian plates have none of the suggestions of the plate printer's art of

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

retroussage. Two proofs printed from the same copper, one with his earlier, the other with his later method, would appear at first glance as two distinct subjects. Closer inspection would bring out the fact that he had resorted to two different kinds of printing, the later one involving the retroussage, which consisted in making the ink rise out of the lines and spread itself upon the plate. The plate with such treatment yields a rich, soft tone. Whistler went beyond this method, leaving much ink on the surface of the plate which gave an added depth of tone to the water or other parts.

As I never noticed this effect in any of his plates previous to his Venetian, and as it was not used in the first of these, I have often thought that the monotype or

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

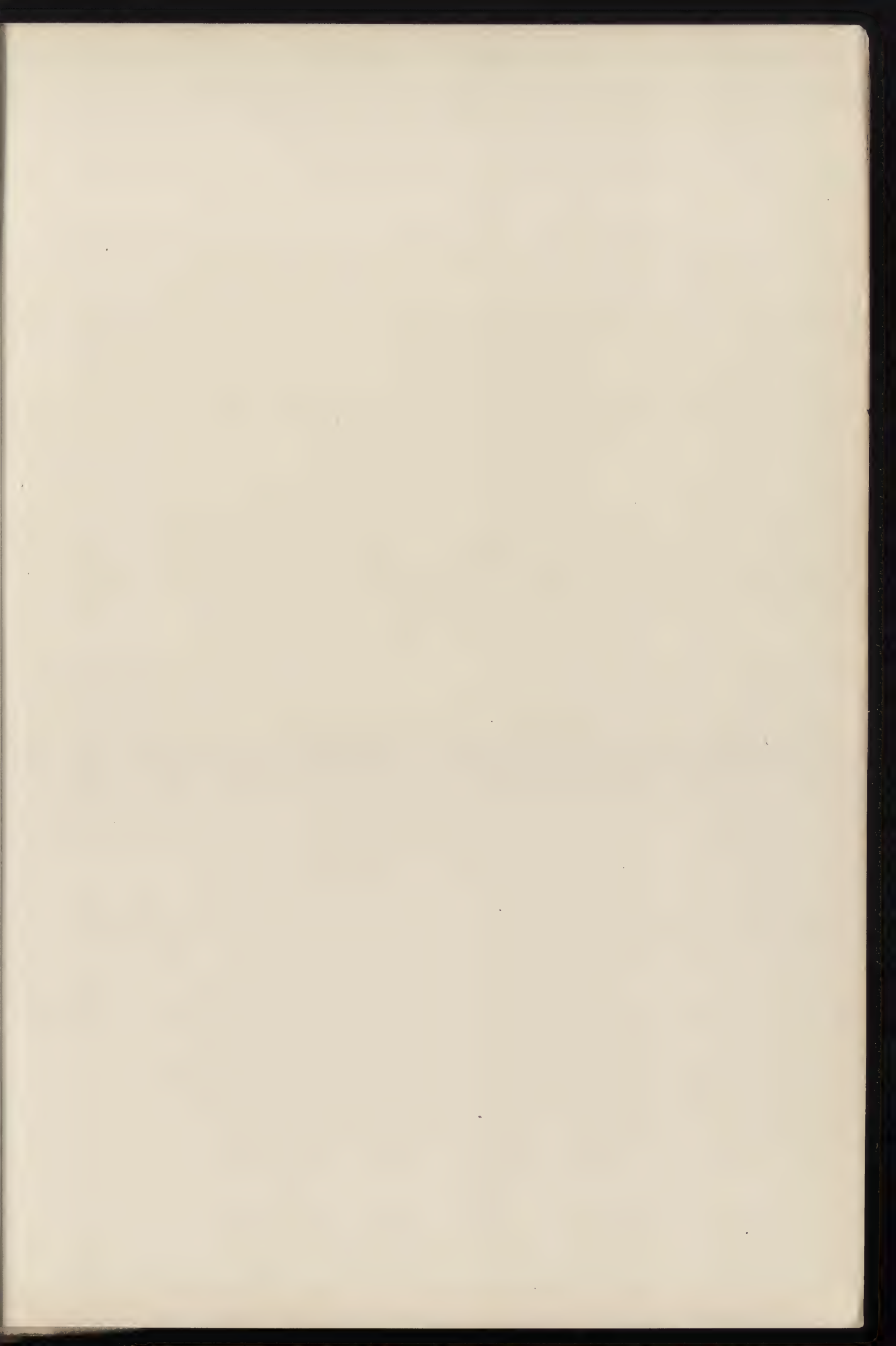
Bachertype, as they were locally known, may have influenced him to adopt this means of embellishing his prints.

Bachertype is a meaningless term in itself, and requires an explanation. While in Florence, Mr. Duveneck and his class, of which I was a member, used to spend some of their evenings in a social way in the homes of the American and English colony in that city. As a means of amusement, we often painted a face or landscape upon a plate with some pointed instrument or thumb, using burnt sienna or ivory black and a medium. This would be run through my press—hence the term Bachertype. One print only could be made from one plate because the squashing through the press absorbed all of the color. These would be numbered and

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

raffled for by those present. Some wonderful impressions were made, and many are still in existence.

Whistler knew of this Bachertyping and had seen many of the results. When he arrived in England, he met one of the women who had some of the best of them. I believe Whistler saw in their beauty the possibilities of their further use as a tonal form in the printing of etchings, for the Venetian etchings which were printed at this time reveal a more definite use of this form of printing. Some writers have recognized his adoption of tonal form at this time, and have called it a new scientific truth in the Whistler art of printing. This can hardly be true, for I am sure similar effects will be found in the works of any





HAMMER AND ANVIL USED BY WHISTLER

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

good etcher, these effects being a result of working with the press.

In "The Garden," "The Balcony," "Two Doorways," "Door and Vine," "The Beggars," "The Doorway," and "Furnace Nocturne," it was necessary to rebite certain passages. In order to do this, a new surface was required; and to get it, the copper was bulged out from the back by the aid of a hammer and anvil. On these plates they were used only to punch out a small part of the copper-plate from the back, which was done by placing the plate face downward on the anvil and then striking with the small part of the hammer the spot to be erased. The stroke bulged out, face downward, the spot to be ground down; after which it was necessary to cut away old lines, re-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

burnish the surface, recoat the plate, etch, and rebite until complete.

Whistler promised to leave the anvil and hammer for me at the Café Florian, where I could call for it when I should come back to Venice the next spring. On my return, I found it there wrapped in a chamois bag to keep it from rusting.

While in Venice, Whistler printed many of his etchings on old Venetian paper which took the ink remarkably well because of its matured, glue sizing. In order to procure this particular kind, he wandered among the old, musty, second-hand book-shops, buying all the old books that had a few blank pages which he cut out for his printing.

One day after he had gathered a dozen sheets or more in this manner, he pointed

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

them out to me saying, "Now, Bacher, if you are a good boy, Whistler may give you a few sheets upon which to print your etchings."

"I should be very glad to get them if you care to part with them," I replied.

"You know, Bacher, that they are very rare, and I gather them all over the continent. In London, you would have to pay a shilling a sheet for paper of this kind."

"Why, Jimmie," I replied, "I could go out any time around Venice and bring home a bundle of paper as good as that."

"Where would you go?" he asked. "You cannot find any as fine as this, for I have tried in every old book-store in Venice."

"Never mind. I will find some," I

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

avowed, and at the same time made up my mind that if there was one sheet left in Venice I would find it.

A few days after this incident, on passing an old junk-shop, I noticed a bundle of old paper outside. On examining it, I found that it contained old Venetian paper. Besides having worm-holes as evidence of age, the dealer said, in reply to my question concerning its age: "The man who made this paper has no nose." This form of Italian humor was new to me and he saw at once that I did not understand, so he added, "That means that he has been dead many, many years. The paper is very old."

I purchased the bundle for a franc, carried it home, assorted and separated it, and placed some where no one could find

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

it. Then I called Whistler in to see my find. He was quite impressed and immediately wanted all of it. He went upstairs, quickly returning with a proof of one of his rare Venetian etchings.

"Now, Bacher," he said, "I will trade this very rare Whistler proof for your paper. Just look at the proof and see how beautiful it is. There were only six printed from that plate, and some day it will bring you a handsome price."

It was a very beautiful etching, representing Venice and its harbor with many small boats. While I was examining it he was looking around to see if all of the paper that I had was open to his view.

After thinking a moment, I said, "All right. I will trade," and gave him all the paper that was in sight in the room.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"Is that all of the paper?" he inquired.

"Look around for yourself. If you can find any more you can have it," I said.

He did, but was unsuccessful, and the trade was made. I kept the etching on my walls for twenty years. Not long ago, I found one of the six originals in the Lenox Building of the New York Public Library. (See page 141.) I have since sold my copy to a man who loves Whistler's work, and for a sum as large as Whistler anticipated.

Whistler used the paper which he acquired at this time for pulling rare proofs. It had the rich mellow color of age with rare old watermarks delicately impressed upon its surface. Some sheets had been written upon in Italian script. Anything which had been left on by age, particularly if it were written, did not

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

hinder him in its use, but added more to its charm.

During all my life in Venice, I had a charming etching of Whistler's pinned to the wall, having purchased it before leaving America. It was an etching entitled "Boats at Mooring—Evening, Whistler, 1859."

When Whistler first saw it he seemed greatly pleased, especially so when I told him that I had carried it with me through England, France, and Germany. He would often compare his latest proofs with it to see if his work in Venice was superior. Although the print had upon it some of the best work which Whistler ever did, he often thought his later work superior, and said, "Whistler will do much better with his Venetian plates."

I told him that I could not make out

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

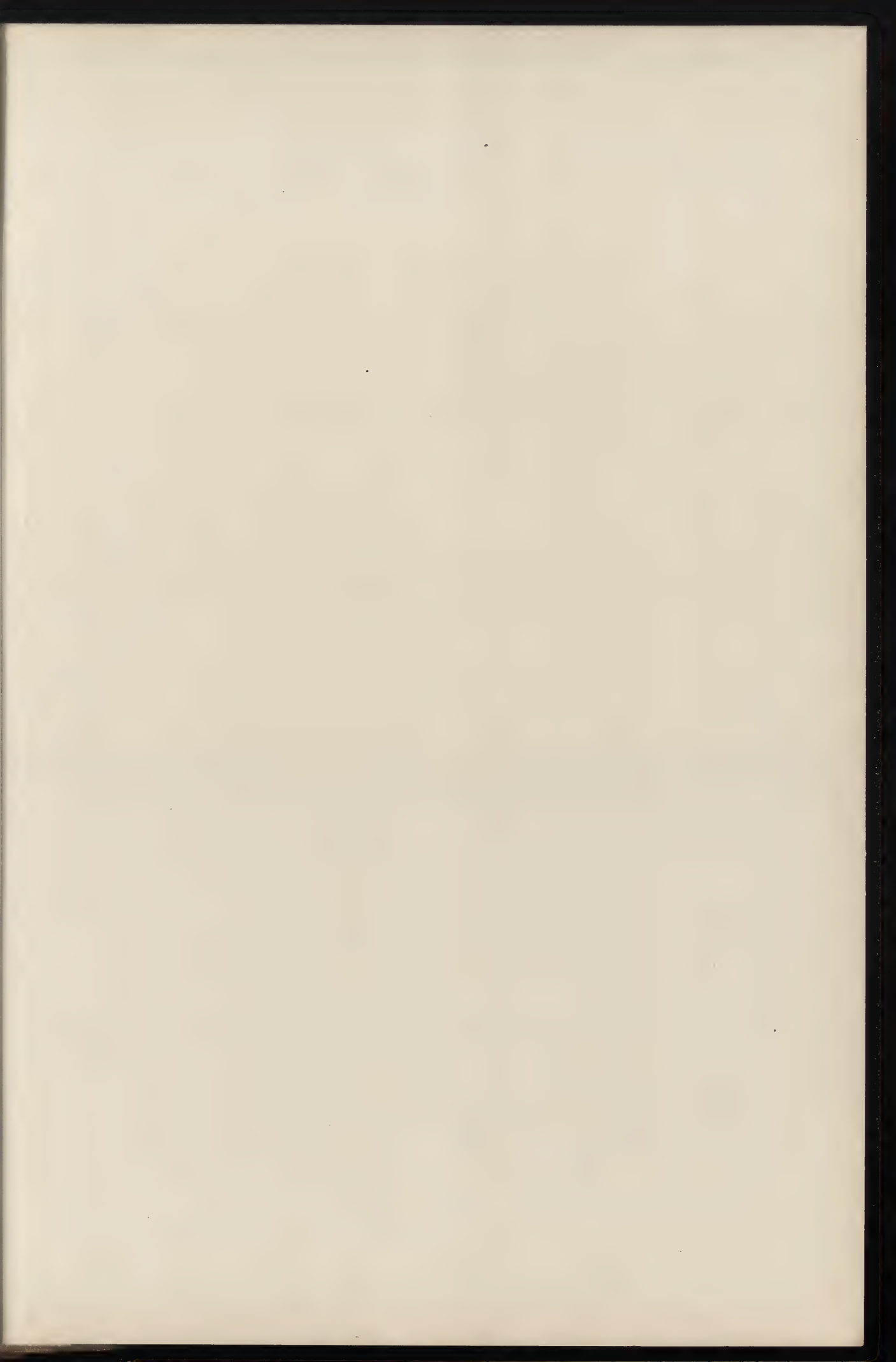
the first tall figure on the wharf next to the five figures on the bow of the boat.

"Can't you see that he is smoking a pipe as he leans against the tall pile?"

I could not see it with the naked eye, but with the aid of a magnifying-glass, I easily discerned the hand holding the pipe and the arm leaning upward and backward against the tall pile behind.

Whistler pointed with great pride to the figures going up the stairs, and those standing near the rail on the top. He expressed much pleasure when he pointed to the clock-tower which had each stone clearly defined. It took minute drawing and careful biting to bring out the windows, chimney, and roof.

"The piles come up there quite well, don't they? They prepare the eye to fol-





Whitely 1855

BOATS AT MOORING—EVENING—BILLINGSGATE

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

low well the masts that come next," he once remarked.

He spoke of the splendid stopping-out on the chain that led from the pile on the water to the boats, saying:

"See how sharp the ring is that is attached to the chain!"

He spoke of the treatment of the sky as being difficult as well as the work on the cordage and the small mast near the tall piles behind the other group of masts. In fact, there was hardly a part of the plate which he did not comment upon, some time during the summer.

IX

EARLY in the year 1881, the Provisional Council of the Society of Painter-Etchers, consisting of prominent men, among whom were Alma Tadema, Hamerton, and Dr. F. Seymour Haden, as president, sent invitations to exhibit to many painters and etchers in the United Kingdom for the purpose of obtaining demonstrable proof of the actual state of the art of etching, and of ascertaining whether material existed for the formation of a special society for its further development. The hearty response which the Council re-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ceived to this invitation resulted in an exhibition held at the Hanover Gallery, 47 New Bond Street, London, called the First Exhibition. Mr. Whistler was not a member of this society, and the "Saturday Review" of April 9, 1881, said: "We notice the omission of some distinguished English etchers, that of Mr. Whistler, for instance."

For some reason this society had aroused his animosity. Engraver-etcher and painter-etcher were terms which Whistler abominated, and would always ridicule these expressions, contemptuously referring to the president of the society as a "barber-surgeon." At this time I had made many etchings of Venice, Florence, and Germany, and of these I had sent seventeen to Dowdeswell, Lon-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

don, to be framed and sent to this exhibition. In writing a letter to Whistler, just before, about little matters of personal interest, I incidentally mentioned the sending of my etchings to the exhibition, but very soon received a letter telling me in the strongest terms not to do so. For a full recital of the details respecting the controversy which ensued concerning the Whistler and Duveneck etchings, the reader is referred to Whistler's "Gentle Art of Making Enemies."

This controversy has certainly added to the gaiety of nations, and one cannot but feel sorry for Whistler's unwilling adversaries, the committee of painter-etchers. As usual Whistler had the last word and in his book he closes the chapter with this paragraph:

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WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"May I, without impertinence, ask what really does constitute the 'Painter-Etcher' 'all round,' as Piker has it?—for, of these three gentlemen who have so markedly distinguished themselves in that character, two certainly are not painters—and one does n't etch!"

It was too late to recall my etchings and, besides, I did not care to do so. Later, when I visited Whistler in London, the first thing that he said was: "Your etchings were a success, and looked very pretty; but you should not have gone over to the other kennel."

"But, Jimmy," I said, "why did n't you tell me where I could send them? You told me of no other place."

"You are quite right; I should have told you," was his reply.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Duveneck contributed to this same exhibition three etchings of the Riva, which the society appeared "to have suspected for a moment that the works were really Whistler's." A long controversy ensued. Whistler's side is very well brought out in the following letter:

76 ALDERNEY STREET,
Warwick Square.

MY DEAR MR. BACHER,

Jimmy wishes me to send you the enclosed Scraps—read them first—you will then better understand my letter. Well—Seymour Haden, Legros, and some other man,—driven to madness almost by this and Jimmy's extraordinary success,—resolved to be avenged; so they go to the Fine Arts Society and they ask to see the Whistler etchings of Venice. They are shown to them and after a good deal of talking amongst themselves—they say to the Secretary,—“Mr.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Whistler is bound by you to publish no more plates of Venice for a year, is he not?" "Certainly he is," says the man. "Oh, that 's it, is it? Do you mind putting on your hat, Mr. Brown, and coming over to the Hanover Gallery?" So, accordingly, they take Mr. Brown over to the place and point out to him three etchings of more or less the same subjects by Mr. Duveneck and declare them to be Whistler's. Mr. Brown, on looking at them says at once, "They are not Whistler's"—at which remark they snort and still try to convince him that Jimmy is swindling the F. A. S. and is, in short, a scoundrel and a thief.

You can imagine Whistler when the man tells him all this. He, of course, explains that Mr. Duveneck is a great personal friend of his who was in Venice at the same time—who was with all his "boys"—was very much amongst all the etching business and consequently any similarity of style could only have occurred from that.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

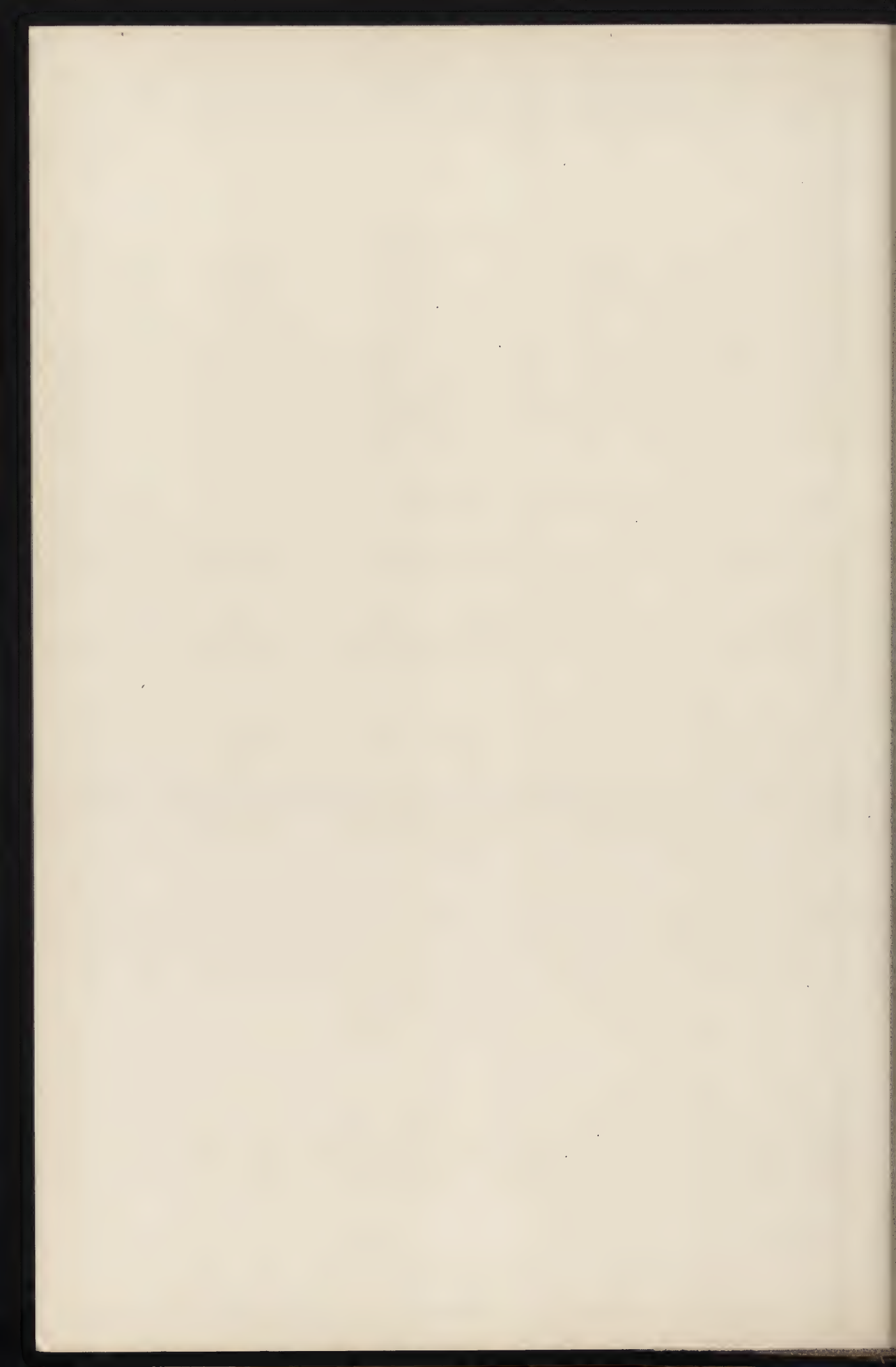
After this, he goes over to the Hanover Gallery to give the three of them a thrashing to the best of his ability—but unfortunately he found the gallery closed. However, all that got very much talked about, and the best of it is they come to the conclusion that they have got themselves in an awful mess, and so send Jimmy a letter of most abject apology, which letter, with one or two others, will most likely be published—in fact, is sure to be. You shall have the papers and see for yourself.

Whistler says he wrote you a line a week or so ago advising you on no account to have anything to do with the "Painter-Etchers"—he says it is a thoroughly rotten scheme and bound to fall through. You will see by the enclosed how the whole thing is ridiculed. So Jimmy says he can't have his pet pupil Bacher in it, and thinks you had better write at once, to Dowdeswell, and tell him not to send your etchings there—for it would do you more harm than good to be



VENICE

Unfinished plate destroyed by Whistler after five or six proofs had been taken



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

in any way connected with that set. I think if we wait a little we shall see great fun out of all this.

Thank you so much for those lovely proofs—we are going to have them framed. The scrap-book comes directly with some photos of Jimmy for you “boys,” and please tell Mr. Ritter that he shall have the autograph, and Mr. Pennington that Jimmy will write.

I was sure you would like my dress. I’ve just been enjoying myself, I can tell you, and have managed to spend a hundred pounds on myself,—what do you think of that, after the impecuniosity of Venice? Ah, well, I should like to go back there all the same. I have lots of things to tell you, but cannot stay now, as I am just off to a swell luncheon. So with kindest regards to all and love from Jimmy to yourself,

Believe me always your sincere friend
and well-wisher

MAUD WHISTLER.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

It is only fair to say that Duveneck made the etchings of the Riva before Whistler made his. Whistler saw them as I was helping Duveneck bite the plates, and frankly said: "Whistler must do the Riva also."

X

IN 1868, Philip Gilbert Hamerton published his volume "Etching and Etchers." In the preparation of this book he wrote to Whistler (Sept. 13, 1867), asking him to submit a set of proofs for his examination and for him to write about. Whistler paid no attention to the letter, and when the book was issued, the following comment was made relative to the "unanswered letter":

I have been told that, if application is made by letter to Mr. Whistler for a set of his etchings, he may perhaps, if he chooses to answer the letter, do the applicant the favour to let him

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

have a copy for about the price of a good horse; but beyond such exceptional instances as this, Mr. Whistler's etchings are not in the market. First, the public would not buy and then the artist would not sell, so that there has been little commerce between them.

Whistler waited thirteen years before the proper time arrived for him to retaliate. It happened in about this way: Whistler was looking over my first edition of Hamerton's "Etching and Etchers" in the Casa Jankovitz. After looking through the pictures, he came back to the chapter on himself, containing almost six pages of printed matter. He read every word of it. At the passage above quoted he commented, "Yes, he wrote me for a set."

"Did n't you send them?" I asked.





"THE MAST"—FIRST STATE OF PLATE



"THE MAST"—FINISHED STATE

The two figures near the mast have been completed; the figures in the foreground and the wall behind them have been enriched

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"Of course not," was his answer.

"But why did n't you let him have them?"

"But why should Whistler?"

"I should have thought it would have done you some good," I added.

"But how could he? Now, see what he says, and he read: " 'He may perhaps, if he chooses to answer the letter, do the applicant the favour to let him have a copy for about the price of a good horse.' Can't you see he 's angry because Whistler never answered his letter?"

Whistler borrowed the book, and copied many passages from it, putting them aside for future use.¹

Some time after this, he called to me

¹ See "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," pp. 79, 98, 99, 100.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

loudly from his room above: "How do you spell Hamerton—with one *m* or two *m's*?"

"With one *m*," I yelled back.

"Oh, —— it! I spelled it with two!" And in the same breath he added: "Good! So much the better. It will irritate; I will leave it so, and send it as it is."

He sent the letter, August 16, 1880, and it appeared in the "New York Tribune," September 12, 1880.

SIR:—In Scribner's Magazine¹ for this month there appears an article on Mr. Seymour Haden, the eminent surgeon-etcher, by *a* Mr. Hamerton.

This letter did not appear with Hamerton misspelled, but the droll little "*a*" is there, and quite as stinging, as will be

¹ Now "The Century"

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

observed in the following, which appeared in the "New York Tribune," October 11, 1880, from which I quote the conclusion.

It is scarcely necessary that I should allude to Mr. Whistler's studied discourtesy in calling me "*a* Mr. Hamerton." It does me no harm, but it is a breach of ordinary good manners in speaking of a well-known writer.

Yours obediently,

P. G. HAMERTON.

Whistler often borrowed this book and had marked passages in the chapter on Dr. F. Seymour Haden, his brother-in-law, whom he cordially disliked. His exact purpose in doing this I never knew. The article on Haden states facts which, while apparently derogatory to him as an etcher, are used to show how really great

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

he was. All of these passages Whistler has underlined in my book. For instance, he underlined the following:

The production of an etching is too serious and difficult a matter to be undertaken when the mind is preoccupied by other interests; and though it may require only three hours to etch a plate, these hours must be preceded by other hours of uninterrupted tranquility, and there must be no anxiety about work to be done, or appointments to be kept, just when the plate is finished. An active surgeon or lawyer, however true might be his natural gift as an artist, however consummate his acquired facility, could not, in short intervals stolen from his profession, get himself sufficiently into the artistic frame of mind for the production of good work.

XI

THE Fine Arts Society of London commissioned Whistler to execute twelve etchings of Venice. In going there, he also had in mind an exhibition of his own which he intended to have on his return to London. With this duality of purpose, he did a vast amount of work, the Grolier Club having catalogued in the neighborhood of fifty etchings as belonging to Venice.

As Whistler progressed with his contract, he would change an etching from the Fine Arts' set, as he called it, to his own, replacing it with a more recent

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

plate. Thus he continued rearranging the two classes until his departure from Venice, at which time he had the Society's collection fairly well defined. On his arrival in London, the Society placed the etchings on exhibition. They were a great success, as the following letters from Maud Whistler for Jimmy bear evidence:

Monday.

DEAR MR. BACHER:

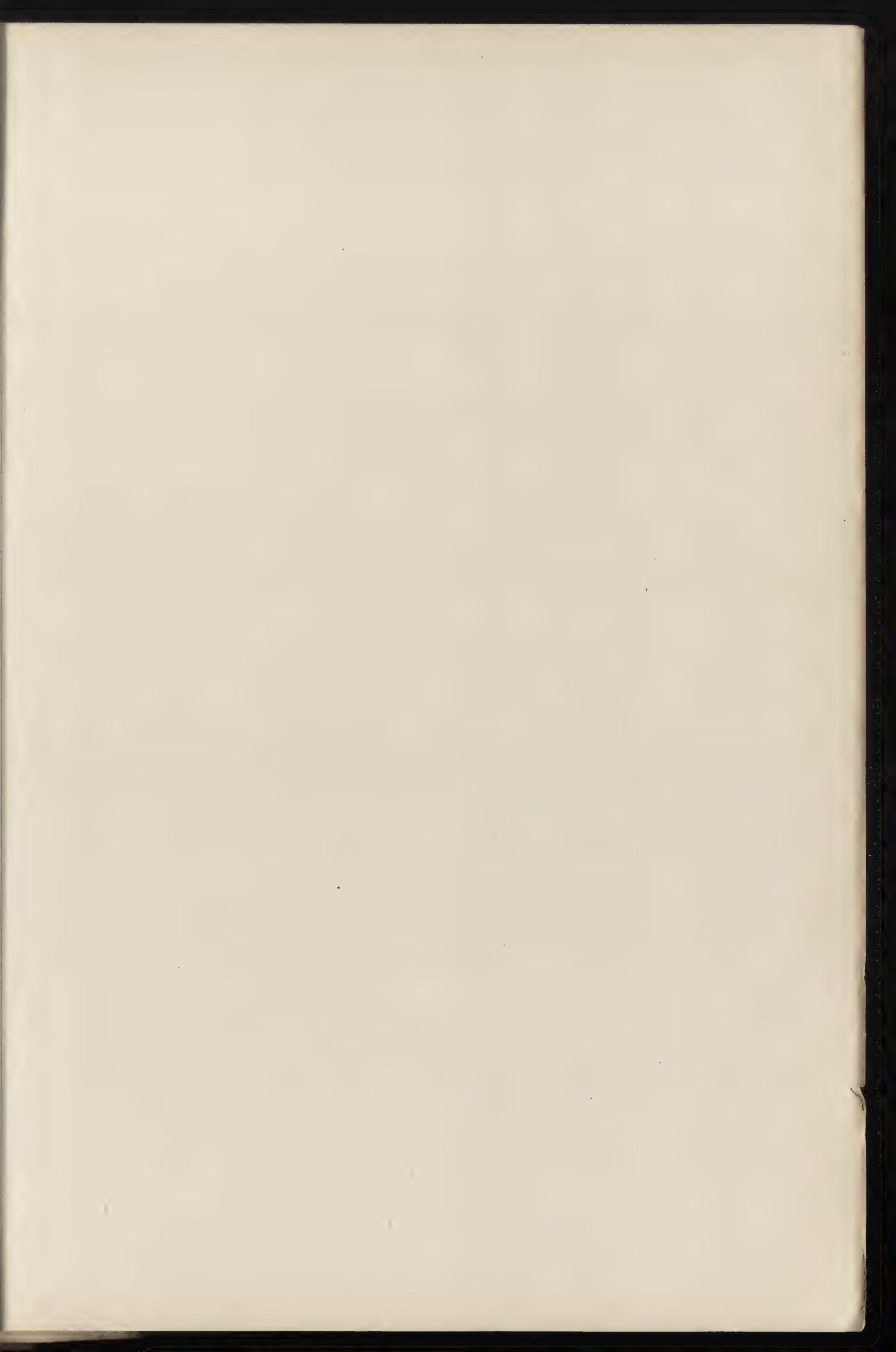
What you can think of Whistler by this time I don't know,—something very dreadful, he is afraid,—so he is getting me to make excuses for him and promises to put a line or two at the bottom of this by way of apology.

Well I can only say he has been frightfully occupied every day and hour since we came home in bringing out the etchings and pastels—the etchings, of course, were exhibited first and were



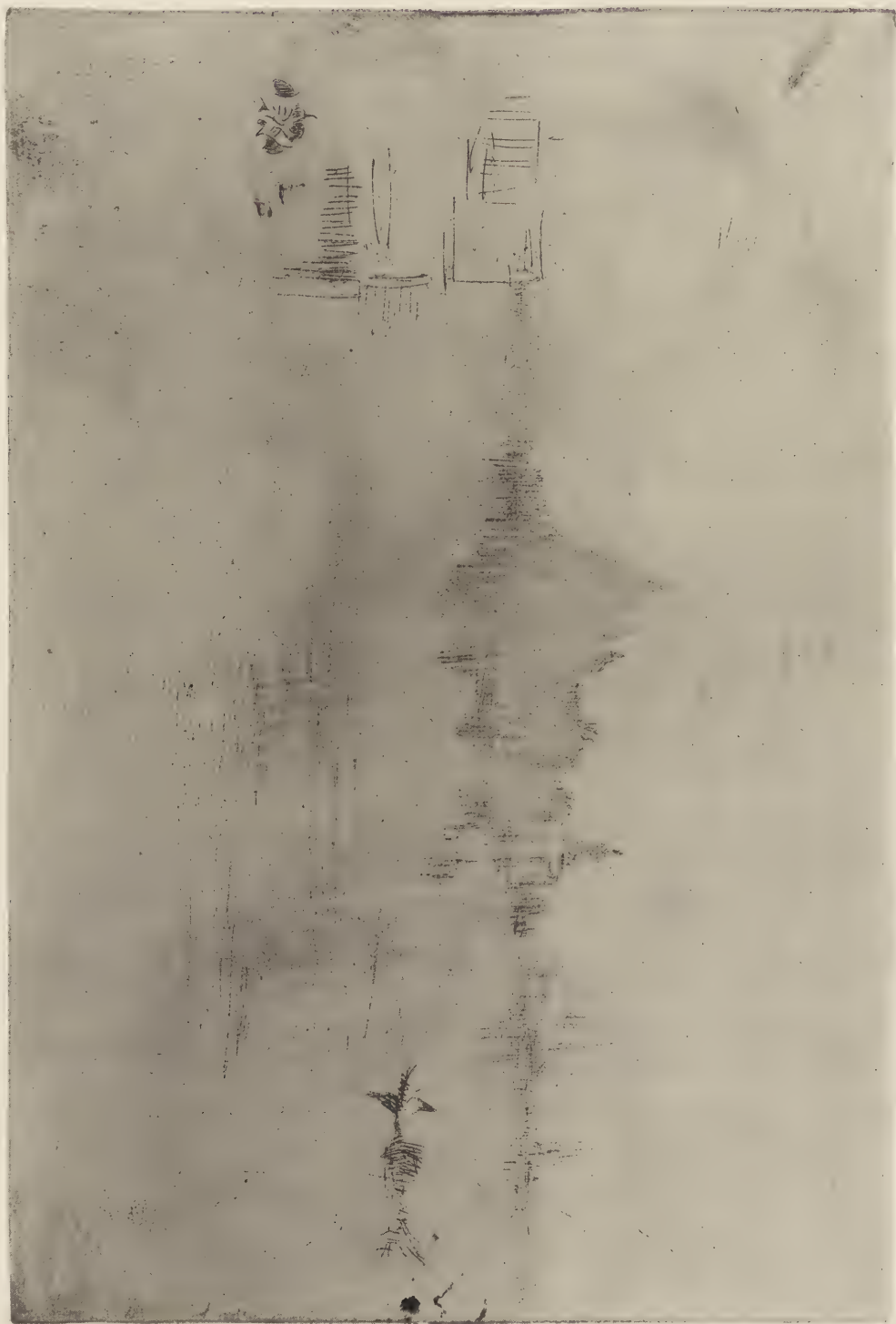
PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER
From the soft-ground etching by Rajon







NOCTURNE-SALUTE-LATER STATE





WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

a *great success*. I dare say you have seen some accounts of them—most of the papers spoke in the highest possible terms of them and everything was as great a triumph as ever Jimmy could wish—but of course all the other artists were furious.

MAUD WHISTLER.

The exhibition of his own etchings was made two or three years after, but I never received any letters from him concerning it.

The Lenox Branch of the New York Public Library has catalogued the set which went to the Fine Arts Society as follows:

Little Venice,
Nocturne,
Little Mast,

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WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

The Little Lagoon,
The Palaces,
The Doorway,
The Piazzetta,
The Traghetto,
The Riva,
Two Doorways,
The Beggars,
The Mast.

The etchings reproduced here are essentially a collector's set of proofs, never published, and very difficult to find, as I know of but one other such group in existence. Most of them are from incomplete states of the plates. They show remarkably well, not only the changes in lines from those of the completed states,—some of which are shown for comparison,

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

—but Whistler's method of work. The most interesting example in the group is "The Traghetto," the following description of which is of deep importance.

During my first visit to Whistler, when he was living near the Frari, it was my good fortune to see all of his works. Some were in oil, many were pastels, and all of his copperplates and proofs were there. Among the latter was the first proof of "The Traghetto," the most remarkable of all. I was lavish in my praise. At length my exhausted vocabulary left me nothing but that good, homely expression, "Oh, what a bully etching that is! But why, Mr. Whistler, do you keep that beautiful print pinned to the wall? It should be mounted and put away in a portfolio."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"Yes, yes," he answered, "I know; but Whistler wishes to keep it always before him to compare it with other proofs. As you seem so much pleased with the first proof, Whistler will let you have a look at a better proof, drawn from the same plate in a later state." As he placed the new print before me he remarked: "I daresay you will notice the vast improvement. This is the second state of the plate."

At the first glance I noticed that he had added many new lines, thereby losing much of the life and charm of the first beautiful proof. By comparing the two prints, it seemed that he was losing his grip on that plate. Divining that I perceived this, a shadow of disappointment crossed his face as he brought me the third proof of the same plate. This last



NOCTURNE—EARLY STATE



NOCTURNE—FINISHED PLATE

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

one represented the actual, sad condition of the copperplate as it was then. Horrors! What a shock ran through me! The plate was ruined, irrevocably ruined! I was stunned for a moment, and falteringly questioned him for the reasons that had influenced him to dare to add another line to the finished state of the copperplate which had yielded such a glorious proof as I had before me on the wall.

"I changed it because a duffer—a —— duffer—a painter—thought it was incomplete." This was all he said, but he seemed very bitter.

On several occasions, after he had moved to the Casa Jankovitz, he mentioned "The Traghetto" plate. It troubled him very much. He would say:

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"I wonder how Whistler can get the plate back again like the first proof. Whistler must find some way to do it."

One morning he surprised me by saying: "Whistler has decided to do 'The Traghetto' all over again. Now sit down, and he will tell you just how he is going about it. Whistler will take this first copperplate to his Italian coppersmith and have him make a duplicate in size and thickness. You know what beautiful thin plates he makes. Well, this will take a week. When Whistler gets the new one, he will prepare it with his swell-est ground, as you know only Whistler can do. Now, listen! This is the interesting part. Whistler will use your press, of course, and will ink the first plate,—not with black printing ink, mind

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

you,—but with white paint from a tube just the same as that with which you paint pictures. Now what do you think of that?"

"Well, I don't know what to think just yet," I said; "but tell me more about it."

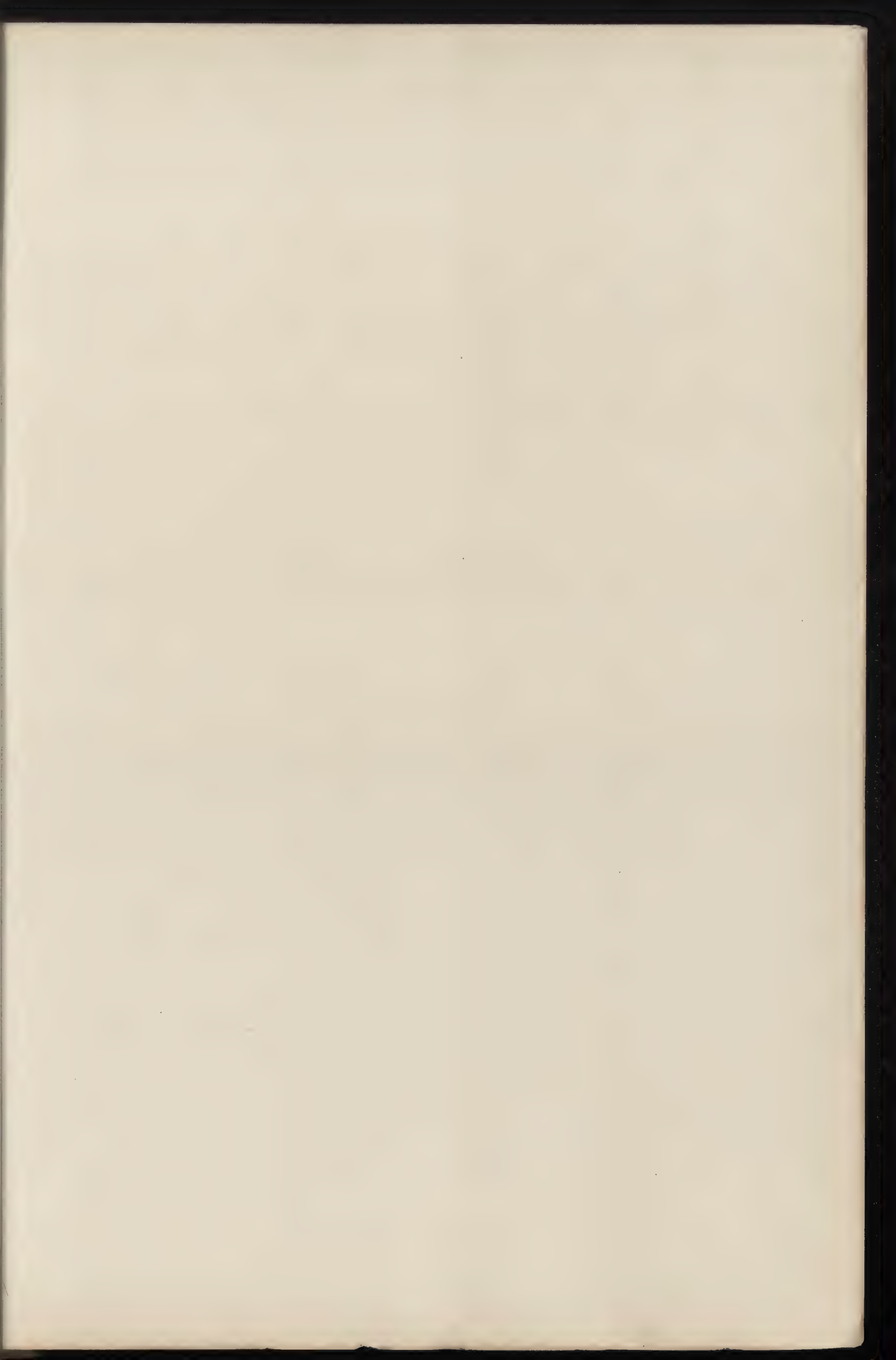
"Well, then, when the plate is inked with white tube paint, cleaned and wiped as for ordinary printing, he will run it through the press and pull a proof on Dutch paper. Whistler will take the new plate, already prepared with a fresh black etching ground. Placing the fresh white proof upon this, he will run it through the press under light pressure, otherwise the white paint pressed on a non-absorbent surface will squash out and blur. You must help me, and, if we are successful, the result ought to be a

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

perfect impression, a replica in white upon a black etching ground."

The result was most gratifying. Every detail worked out exactly as planned. The shining, black surface looked fascinating with its myriads of crisp, white lines. The task now was to find and etch only the lines in the original "Tragheto." Whistler worked for days and days, always with the first beautiful proof before him. Days grew into weeks before he was ready for his favorite nitric acid.

Biting a plate was a serious affair even to Whistler. He usually set aside a day for this trying task, and, as it neared, his gaiety was noticeably affected. During this time was he thinking of his pet theory that "art is the science of the beau-





THE TRAGHETTO—FIRST PLATE

From an impression of the plate described as so beautiful and subsequently injured by the additional work put upon it by Whistler



THE TRAGHETTO—EARLY STATE OF SECOND PLATE

In this plate Whistler endeavored to rival his first production

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

tiful, and to the master as certain as one and one to the mathematician make two, or two and two make four—and like him the master can add or subtract combinations at will?”

When the day arrived, I found him bending over the copper, which was laid flat on the corner of a common kitchen table. There was no bordering wax around the plate, as books say etchers must have; yet Whistler kept the nitric acid swashing to and fro with a feather, which he handled with exceeding nicety. Much of this time his silence was oppressive, and his face wore a troubled look his “dearest enemies,” as he called them, never saw. He knew acids played rude tricks, in spite of his magic manipulation.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Arriving at the end of this tedious process of biting and of stopping out, he cleaned the etching ground from the plate with turpentine and examined the lines near the light, testing their depth with the long, shapely nail of his forefinger, which seemed made for this purpose. The lines of the new "Traghetto" plate were pleasant to look upon, and the result seemed to satisfy the great modern master of etching. Still, he had not reached the end of his journey; the final proof was yet to be made.

The launching of this great plate was an exciting moment. As the gentle old printer of Venice pulled the plate through the massive wooden rollers, heavily padded with felt blankets, nothing was heard but the squeaking of the

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

old wooden press. It was the supreme moment of joy or of keen disappointment—it was the end of the journey and, fortunately the new proof was exquisite. It was another “Traghetto,” the one we now know; but it was not a duplicate of that marvelous first proof.

Whistler placed the two proofs side by side, and minutely compared them. When he came to a variation, he broke the silence, saying, “This bit came nicely, did n’t it?” or “I wonder why the acid did not take hold here. See how well it is bitten over there. Whistler may have to do some dry-point work on this place, and possibly a little biting here, and there.” Altogether, he seemed pleased, and I was certain of it when I heard his unmistakable and positive sign of satis-

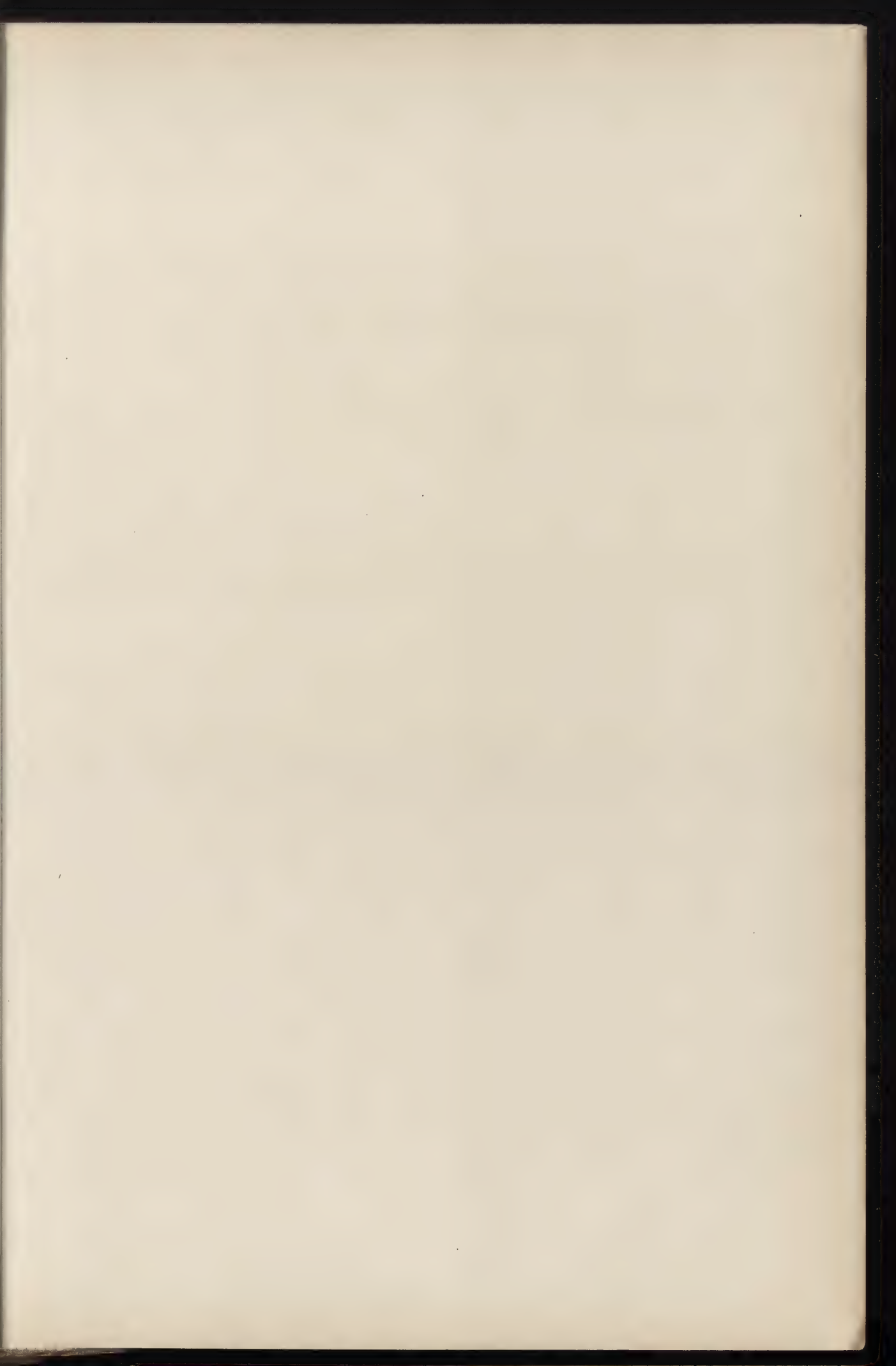
WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

faction—the half-humming of his one
and only song, his jubilant

“We don’t want to fight,
But, by jingo! if we do,
We ’ve got the ships,
We ’ve got the men,
And got the money too! oo-oo!”

PRINT FROM THE FIRST PLATE OF THE TRAGHETTO ETCHING

THIS print from the first plate of the
“Traghetto” etching, while of little artistic
value, represents the state of the plate
after Whistler had worked upon it at the
suggestion of Jobbins, an artist friend.
This proof was the one to which he drew
my attention—the original having been
pinned to the wall of his room. In the





THE TRACHETTO—SECOND STATE OF SECOND PLATE

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

original, the details were beautifully defined, while in this later state many of the lines had been eliminated by rubbing down, preparatory to rebiting. The white portions represent these places. The trees and windows were untouched but the shading in the foreground and passageway had been altered. The figures of the gondoliers drinking at a table were worked in dry-point as suggestions for future use.

PRINT FROM THE SECOND TRAGHETTO
PLATE IN AN EARLY STATE

THE plate from which this print was pulled was made by coating the first "Traghetto" copper with white paint, running it through the press obtaining an impres-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

sion in white upon paper which was transferred to a new plate covered with a black etching ground. The doorway is moved to the left, the vista through the small doorway to the Traghetto is much better, the gondoliers more distinct than in the altered plate. This etching is one of Whistler's best, the lines having a feeling of the flow of paint upon canvas. A great deal concerning his technique can be learned by comparing these proofs with the later states from the same plate.

COMPLETED PROOF

LITTLE SALUTE

THIS etching was made from the Casa Jankovitz. (See page 254.) While Whistler was drawing this plate on the

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

wax ground, he asked me if I could define the object in the foreground near the line which represents the wharf. I told him that it was a gondolier cleaning his boat. He seemed satisfied and continued his work. The finished work contains more figures and other details which show a difference between this state and the finished product.

SAN BIAGIO

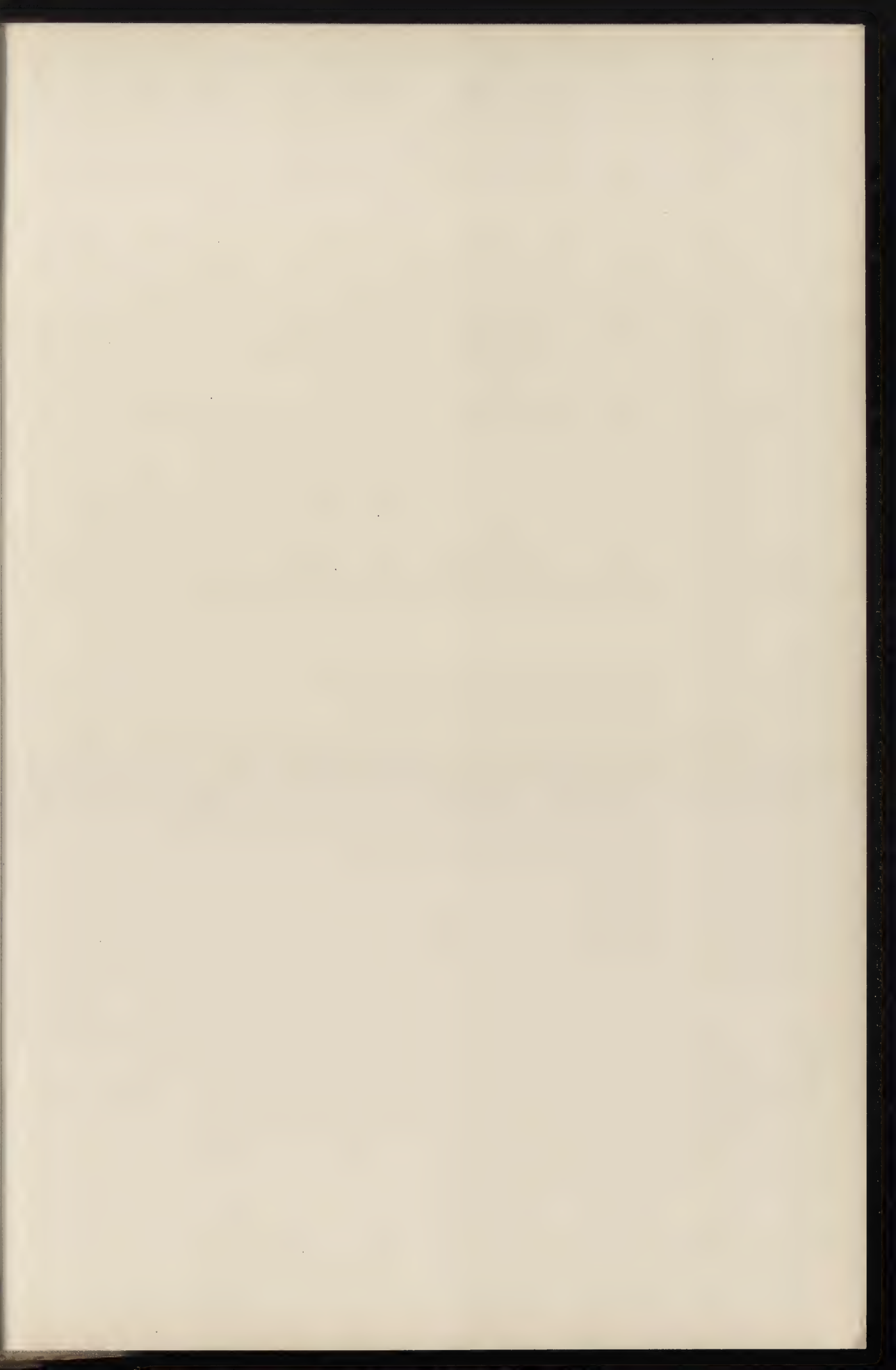
ON leaving the Riva, near the Casa Jan-kovitz, one comes to the San Biagio (see pages 246, 247), in the Castella quarter. This is one of the many callas where lace-makers and bead-stringers could always be found at their work, and where many of us kept our boats moored. Most of the buildings with their beautiful win-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

dows and balconies were in a dilapidated condition. The lines in the early copperplate, of this etching before it was bitten, contrasted well with the black etching ground then. Whistler handed me this plate and asked me to explain to him what the lines represented to me. My answer satisfied him and put him in good humor.

"Tell me," he said, "what you see under the large open arch? What figures do you see around the boat? What do you find in the balcony? Do you see the clothes hanging out?"

This subject has been added to since this proof was made. Many figures well defined will be found under the arch and on the ground,—and some nice shadows on the building.





"THE DOORWAY"—EARLY STATE



"THE DOORWAY"—LATER STATE

The pose of figure on the lowest step has been entirely changed and the garment taken out of her hands. The figure at the back is also changed. Variations in lines show in the water below the figures, possibly from some reflection, or by accident



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

PONTE DEL PIOVAN

THIS bridge, over a Venetian passageway, is supported by columns which are reflected in the water below. This proof (see pages 210, 211) is quite different from the completed state of the plate. Bricks have been added to the walls, shadows on the buildings and the passageway made darker and richer by shadings. His method of continuing this plate to a later state illustrates well his method of working.

THE MAST

THE incomplete state of this plate (see pages 148, 149) shows an alleyway of Venice, looking toward the water, with small palaces on either side and bead-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

stringers at work in the foreground. The few incomplete figures and houses were finished in later states.

THE GARDEN

THE Garden as seen through the open door of the water entrance was etched from Whistler's gondola. The figures were drawn from life as they were found in the subject. This print (see page 234) is from an early state of the plate, and is signed with the butterfly.

A QUIET CANAL

THIS etching is exceedingly characteristic of Venice though not uncommon. One may walk to all parts of the city by means of these passageways. In this

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

state of the plate (see page 263), a white spot is seen on the gondola beneath the bridge. This spot was caused by the rubbing down with stone and charcoal after having been bulged out with the anvil and hammer. This state of the plate well represents Whistler's method of beginning an etching.

THE RENAISSANCE DOOR

THE photograph of the Renaissance doorway (see page 195) shows the fineness of detail as the camera portrays it. This old palace was one of the most beautiful in Venice, and at this time was used by a chair-maker as the place to carry on his work. This etching (see page 188) from an early state of the plate is a delineation

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

of the same doorway made from Whistler's gondola, at a spot about fifteen or twenty feet across the canal near the Doge's palace. The exquisite beauty in this proof consists in its wonderfully accurate detail of the carving and fretwork, even to the spider-webs. (See page 189.) On one occasion, Whistler asked me if I knew what was hanging from the ceiling. I told him that they looked like rush-bottomed chairs, which was entirely correct. He often asked questions of this kind in order to make sure that he was describing rightly to other eyes.

On such occasions, he always insisted on a frank expression of my opinion. I always gave it, although sometimes he pretended that he did not like what I said. Occasionally he would try to



THE RENAISSANCE DOOR

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

change my position by saying: "Bacher, you don't know to whom you are talking—you are talking to Whistler!"

DAWN

THIS is a dry, unembellished print, but for the student of Whistler it is an excellent example for the study of lines without tone. In other proofs which Whistler printed, he left much tone on the surface of the plate, "wiping out" spots along the shore to represent gas-lights. By comparing this proof with his later ones, the beautiful effect of his use of tone in the art of printing is easily comprehended. This etching is the most meager in lines of any of his plates of Venice, yet, by the use of tone and few lines, he

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

has expressed more than in any other plate which I can remember.

WOOD BARGES

THE etching (see pages 222, 223), Wood Barges, was made on the Guidecca Canal, looking toward the San Giorgio, where these boats were always moored, waiting for prospective purchasers. The lines of the Peninsula and Oriental steamer are exquisite. While he was working on this boat he painted out small parts of the general lines with the retouching varnish, varying them up and down, sometimes leaving them for several days, until the desired shape was obtained. The boat was left white because it fitted the general scheme of the plate.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

Working at irregular intervals, Whistler devoted a month or six weeks to this plate. It is the only Whistler plate that was bitten with Dutch Mordant. He not only thought but always said that it was over-bitten.

NOCTURNE—SALUTE

THE differences in the states of this plate (see pages 160, 161) are interesting as showing how much could be done to carry a subject further after the first biting.

The first and rare state (now owned by Mr. McComber) is also an example of Mr. Whistler's attitude towards his subjects—without haste or pre-occupation. No considerations of time or the ordinary distractions of life ever interfered to disturb that tentativeness of feeling waiting

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

on perfection and the devoted absorption in his art which detach his work absolutely from any taint of manufacture or commerce. This first impression is like a breath in its delicate elusiveness which is not to be confounded with its incompleteness.

XII

THE following anecdotes of Whistler will help to bring his personality before the reader.

WOLKOFF, THE RUSSIAN IMITATOR

ONE evening there was a convivial gathering of men from many different nations seated about a table in an open court of the Bauer Grünwald, a well-known Venetian restaurant. The conversation, I believe, was in English, and the subject of Whistler's pastels was brought up by one of his enthusiastic American admirers. A Russian named Wolkoff was flippant

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

and depreciating, ridiculing them as works of art, jeeringly saying that he was willing to bet that he could make half a dozen pastels as good as Whistler's, and, if they were mixed with his, nobody could tell them apart. The American was surprised and remarked:

"I 'll bet a champagne dinner for all present that you can't."

"All right, I 'll take your bet, and prove what I say; but I will make one condition only, and it must be agreed upon by all present: I must be permitted to see Whistler's pastels before I begin."

"I will agree to that, and arrange a day when you can see them."

All this was unknown to Whistler, who was innocent of the reason for the call of his Russian guest. He received

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

him charmingly, and showed him all his pastels. These he pinned on large cardboards, carefully, almost ceremoniously, and placed them before him upon a chair that served as an easel. This was the usual way he exhibited his pastels or etchings at home. The Russian was not heard from for six weeks. Then the committee in charge was informed that he could not go on because he found it impossible to purchase in Venice the peculiar, brilliant pastels with which Whistler obtained his effects.

The American would not let him slip through in that way, so he managed to make it possible for his Russian friend to select numerous small pieces from Whistler's own pastel-boxes. He selected all he wanted, or thought he needed, for the

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

easy task of making a Whistler pastel, and after this exceptional accommodation, returned to his work, saying he would be ready for the jury in a week.

How or by whom the six jurors were selected I do not know, but I remember that two strangers, an Austrian and a Dutchman, were among them; Spain was represented by Martin Rico, England by Henry Woods, R.A., and America by Frank Duveneck and myself. By this time Whistler knew of the wager. The jury met in a house on the Riva not far from the Casa Jankovitz, near enough for him to bring his pastels conveniently. The meeting was in a very long room facing the lagoons. The American who had accepted the wager was not there; Wolkoff was at home, sick in bed; Whistler

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

was in the darkest and farthest corner, with his back to the company and his pastels on a long table. I was selected to bring each exhibit from Whistler's hands and place it on a high-backed chair.

It was an extraordinary position in which Whistler was placed, and a veritable ordeal which he faced. He was serious and wore a troubled look, the truth being that he was nervous at the possibility that the jury might let one of the Russian's pastels slip by as one of his own. I am glad to say, however, that, whenever a Wolkoff appeared, it was received with groans and shouts of "Take it away!" Not for one moment was there the least doubt or a dissenting voice.

These pastels were put on view at a special exhibition given by him in Lon-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

don during the winter of 1881. The following extracts from a letter concerning them record the favor with which they were received in London.

As to the pastels, well—they are the fashion. There has never been such a success known. Whistler has decorated a room for them,—an arrangement in brown, gold, and Venetian red,—which is very lovely, and in it they look perfect gems. All the London world was at the private view—princesses, painters, beauties, actors, everybody. In fact, at one moment of the day it was impossible to move, for the room was crammed. Even Whistler's enemies were obliged to acknowledge their loveliness. The criticisms were one and all high in their praise.

One of them published the story of Wolkoff, the Russian imitator, and said he was obliged to take a course of mud baths after his defeat. Altogether it has been a great lark, and Whistler

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

has often said, "Would n't the boys appreciate the fun of all this?"

I am going to send you a little book of all the cuttings of the newspapers, so that you can see for yourself.

The best of it is, all the pastels are selling. Four hundred pounds' worth went the first day; now over a thousand pounds' worth are sold. The prices range from twenty to sixty guineas, and nobody grumbles at paying for them.

MAUD WHISTLER.

THE SECRET OF DRAWING

"BACHER, what would you give Whistler if he would tell you his secret of drawing correctly?"

"What can I give you for it, Jimmy?" I answered earnestly. "You know everything I own, and have here. Just tell me what you want me to give you."

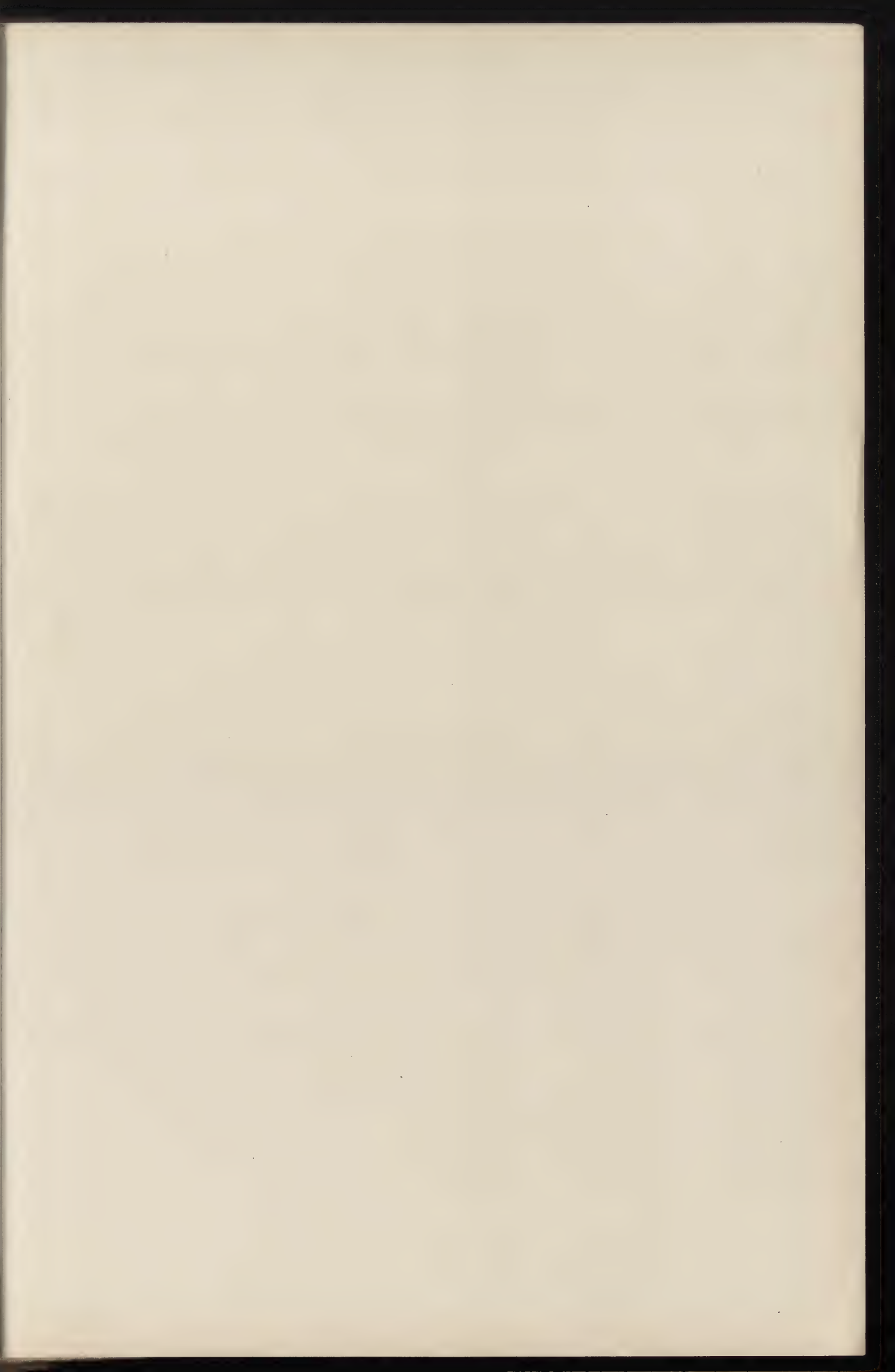
WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"But would n't you like to know Whistler's secret?"

"Of course I should; but why do you tantalize me when you know perfectly well that everything I have has been at your disposal if you want it. Why don't you express a wish for something you want in exchange for your secret?"

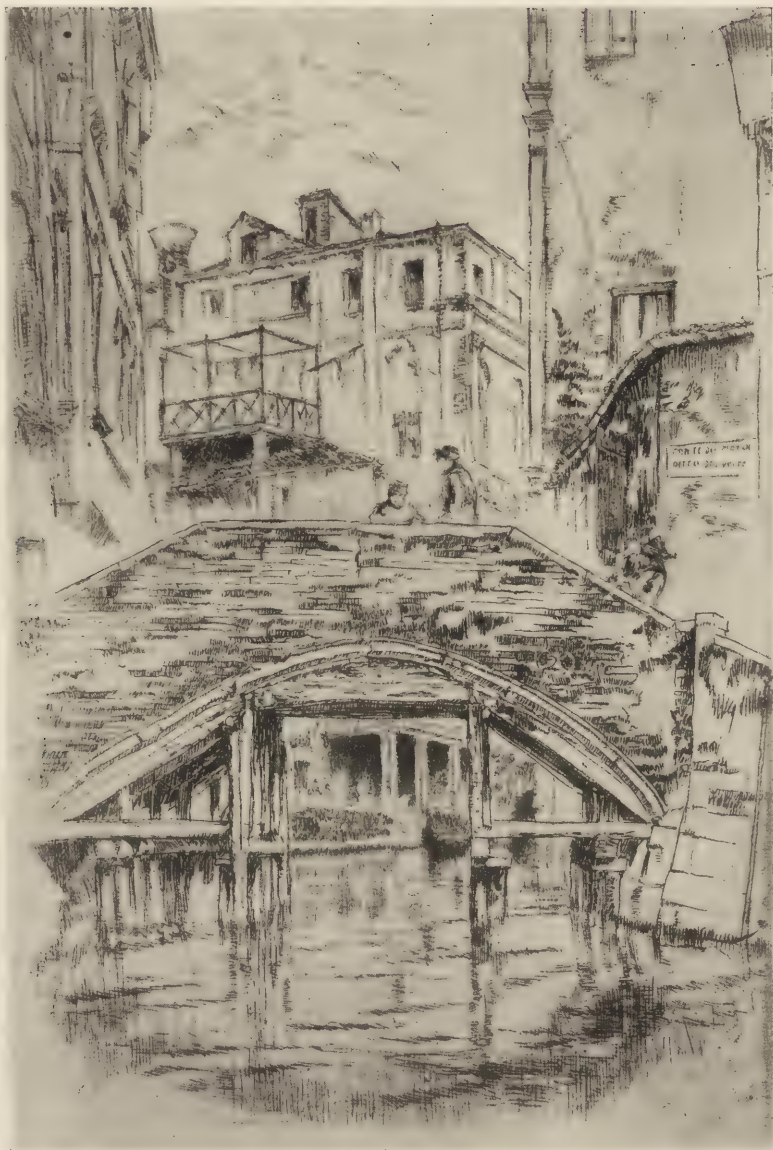
"But, Bacher, you don't seem to realize the value of Whistler's secret. If you had, you would have told him how much you would give to know it."

I could have offered him some fabulous sum to please him for the moment; but I did not, and told him instead that I did not think he had a secret at all, and that if he had a valuable one, he would tell it. From his evident irritation and hasty retort I dreaded something awful.





PONTE DEL PIOVAN—EARLY STATE



PONTE DEL PIOVAN—COMPLETED STATE

In this plate, many details are added to the building on the right, some work is done on the roof over the bridge, and a few lines are added to the building on the left



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

"Perhaps," I thought, "I shall now see him as he looked in that detestable photograph with an evil sneer he once showed me—a picture he was fond of, and wished the world to know him by, while he talked caressingly of the sneer as the way Whistler would look at his enemies."

My painful emotion vanished when I saw on his face a playful expression that mellowed with good humor to the kindest and most lovable look. He ended the subject in a jolly tone: "Bacher, you will never know what you have lost."

In London, six years after, I asked Whistler if he remembered what he told me about his secret of drawing. He looked at me sharply, with a bright twinkle in his eye, and said, "You never got

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the secret, did you, Bacher?" Eighteen years later I found this in "Whistler as I Knew Him," by Mortimer Menpes:

Only once I remember him really teaching us anything. He told it to us two pupils, and Sickert, I remember, took down every word on his cuff. He described how in Venice once he was drawing a bridge, and suddenly, as though in a revelation, the secret of drawing came to him. He felt that he wanted to keep it to himself, lest some one should use it—it was so sure, so marvelous. This is roughly how he described it: "I began first of all by seizing upon the chief point of interest—perhaps it might have been the extreme distance,—the little palaces and shipping beneath the bridge. If so, I would begin drawing that distance in elaborately, and then would expand from it until I came to the bridge, which I would draw in one broad sweep. If by chance I did not see the whole bridge, I would

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

not put it in. In this way the picture must necessarily be a perfect thing from start to finish. Even if one were to be arrested in the middle of it, it would still be a fine and complete picture.

In this description of Whistler's secret of drawing, I find no change from his former methods. And, after all these years, I feel as certain now as I did then that Whistler had no secret of drawing, because in his earlier works on the Thames and in the portrait of his mother I find the same "sure, marvelous" drawing that is found in his later works.

A COCK-FIGHT STORY

APROPOS of something, Whistler once told a cock-fight story so vividly that only a man with a sailor instinct could

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

tell it as well, mimic it so keenly, and enjoy it so thoroughly. It was a story of a strange species of the American cock, pictured to the smallest detail so beautifully that one forgot that it was a story.

Some American sailors were at a cock-fight in a seaport town in England, when one of them remarked to the owner of the champion:

"We have got an American cock on board that can whip any bird here."

"Go fetch 'im on," said the champion, "chuck 'im in and see. If 'e licks one bird, we 'ave plenty more to throw in that can lick hany blawsted Hamerican bird you can fetch 'ere."

"All right; we 'll bring one," said the sailors. When they got aboard they rigged up an American eagle. After their

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

own manner, they painted, trimmed, spliced, and reefed fore and aft, transforming the eagle to a cock. When ready, they went ashore to pit their new American gamecock against all England.

At the pit, the sailors chucked in their cock, which looked around for other surprises, as he backed close to the wall.

"Now bring on your birds!" yelled the sailors. A strutting cock was thrown into the pit, and was another surprise to the poor dismantled eagle. He backed up closer and closer to the wall, wondering what would happen next. The cock walked three times majestically around the circle, cuffing at his strange opponent, the eagle pitifully abashed and bedrabbled, crouching lower and lower, and looking around and above him for an

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

explanation of what it all meant, while the crowd were yelling madly for the English fighter. The eagle made himself smaller and smaller, but at last, finding that he could get back no farther, and thinking that something was expected of him, suddenly loomed up to his great height, and as the cock dashed at him again, stretched out his long claws and took his opponent by the neck.

Here Whistler ended, with an imitation by motions of what the eagle did. He stretched out his arm, shaped his hand like a claw, which, by this time looked like a real one, drew it to his mouth, and, with one bite, pulled off the head, as he thought an eagle might do it. Then he looked blandly about the room, as the eagle had done, at the astonished

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

crowd and said, "Now bring on your other birds."

ONE OF HIS LITTLE CONTROVERSIES

MUCH has been written about Whistler's controversies with his enemies; little has been written of his care and foresight in preparing for them. He undoubtedly made ready for many that never occurred.

It was one day early in 1880 that he asked me to go to various parts of Venice and copy certain street signs, giving me a list of those he wanted.

"Do the signs exactly as you see them. Don't write the words, but carefully print each letter. Watch the spaces, dots, and commas."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

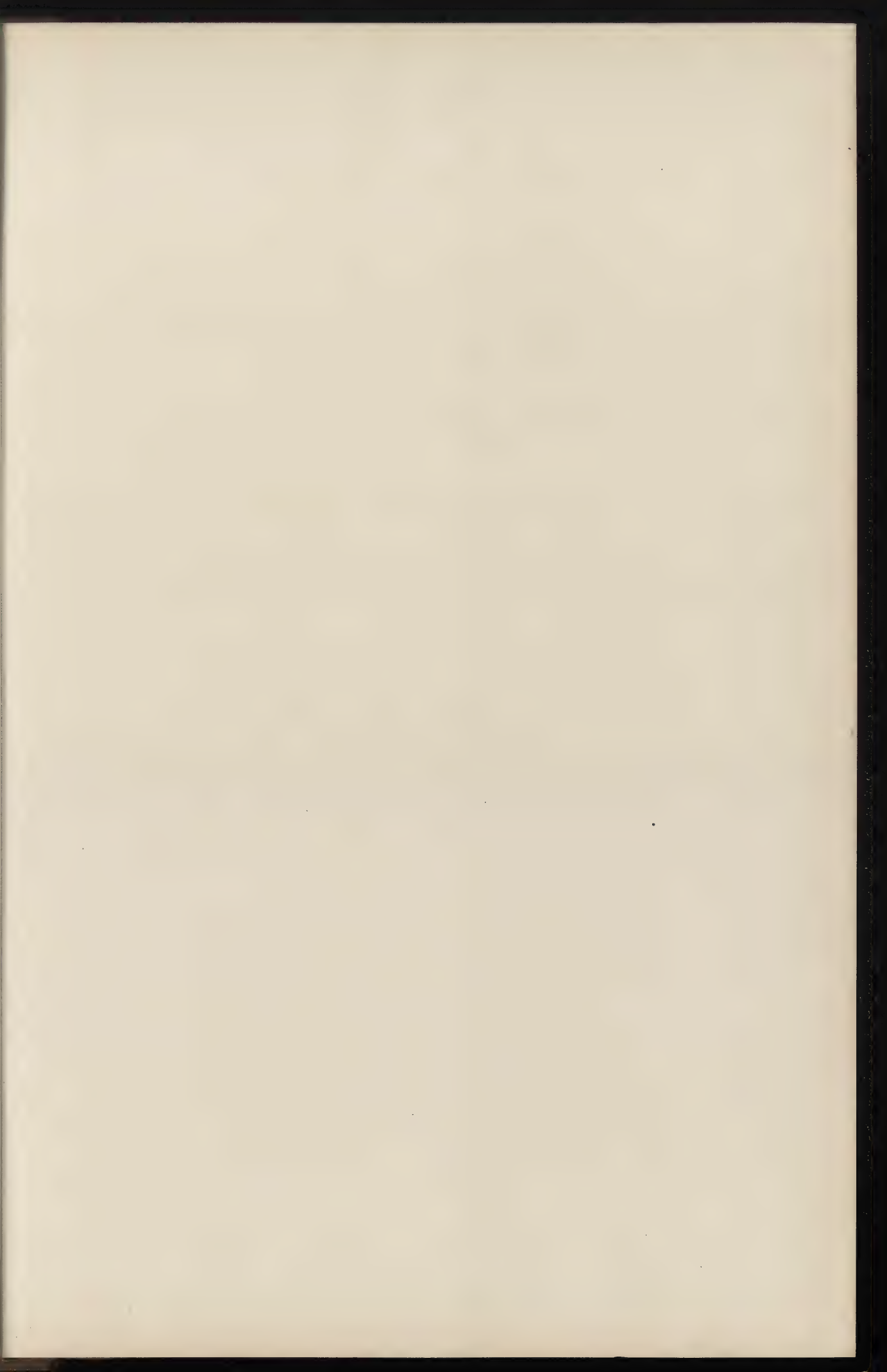
When I brought to him the carefully printed copies, which I had made, he was greatly pleased, and said:

"They are just what I want."

I never knew why he wanted them until ten years later, when I came across these two letters. The first is from "The World," February 9, 1881.

AN EAGER AUTHORITY

MR. WHISTLER knows how to defend himself so perkily that it is a pleasure to attack him. I hasten, therefore, with joy, to submit to you, dear Atlas, who are growing so very clever at your languages, the following crochets and quavers—shall I call them. For Mr. Whistler is just now full of "Notes"—in American-Italian; they are from his delightful brown paper catalogue. To begin with, "Santa Margharita"





SAN GIORGIO—EARLY STATE

SAN GIORGIO—LATER STATE



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

is wrong; it must be either Margarita or Margherita; the other is impossible Italian. Then who or what is "San Giovanni Apostolo et Evangelistoë?" Does the sprightly and shrill McNeill mean this for Latin? And is the "Café Orientale" intended to be French or Italian? It has an *e* too many for French, and an *f* too few for Italian. "Piazette" furthermore does duty for "Piazzetta." Finally I give up. "Campo Sta. Martin." I don't know what that can be. The Italian calendar has a San Martino and a Santa Martina, but Sta. Martin is very curious. The catalogue is exceedingly short, but a few of the names are right.

AN ADMISSION

Whistler's reply was in the issue of February 16, 1881.

TOUCHÉ!—and my compliments to *yc ir* "Correspondent," Atlas, chéri—far from me to jus-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

tify spelling of my own! But who could possibly have supposed an orthographer loose! Evidently, too, "ung vieulx qui a moult roule en Palestine et aultres lieux!"

What it is to be prepared, though! Atlas, mon pauvre ami, you know the story of the witness who, when asked how far he stood from the spot where the deed was done, answered unhesitatingly—"sixty-three feet, seven inches!" "How, sir," cried the prosecuting lawyer, "how can you possibly pretend to such accuracy?" "Well," returned the man in the box, "you see I thought some damn fool would be sure to ask me, and so I measured."

BUTTERFLY.

I was the one who did the "measuring."

THE REAL GOLDFISH STORY, AS TOLD BY WHISTLER

THIS variation of a libel on Whistler appeared recently in a New York paper,

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WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

and is one of a class embracing many species. It is as offensive now as was one of the same kind that I gave Whistler to read years ago in Venice.

Whistler, who had suffered for lack of the necessities of life, came to be able to dine his friends with vases of goldfish on the table, and to throw perfume into the vases at the close of the feast, killing the fishes, and causing them to spurt the perfumed water toward the guests in their expiring gasps."

Whistler told me the story. "Once and for all," as he put it, "so you may understand, Bacher, why I object to such silly trash as 'the goldfish story' which you have just brought me to read. I can't, for the life of me, understand why your papers in America will print such silly twaddle with no point or reason for its

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

appearance; and what amazes me, is the vulgarity of it all and the vulgar way in which I am presented to your American readers. Why, if they must publish the goldfish story, do they leave out the point? You know Whistler never tells a story without a point. If they will take the trouble, any one of the papers in America can procure the copy of the goldfish story just as I told it, and as it was printed in one of the London papers.

"They will print rubbish rather than trouble themselves to get things right. Now, Bacher, Whistler will tell you the story as it occurred in Paris some years ago. You will see that Whistler had nothing to do with goldfish, as newspapers will have it, the credit belonging to my confrère, a very clever Frenchman.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

You will appreciate him and the story better if I tell you how clever and ingenious he was in the schools.

“If it happened that he had neither colors nor money to buy new tubes, he was not disconcerted or discouraged, as others might have been under like circumstances. No, he was far too clever and resourceful to get the ‘blues’ or think of suicide. He would get up cheerfully and look around for some student with a completely stocked palette and ask blandly: ‘What kind of red is that you have on your palette? It seems particularly brilliant. I’ll just take a little on my finger and try it. Thank you, it’s very nice. Oh, yes; it is quite enough, thank you, much obliged,’ and so on. Each person who gave other colors considered it a

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

privilege and honor, and gave with pleasure. He got a bit of color here and a bit there until his palette was completely set for the day's work.

"One afternoon Whistler's ingenious friend came home from the schools earlier than usual. While looking from his window at the play of sunlight on the courtyard below, something new attracted him by the speck-like flashes that met his eye, and would come and go like darts of sun-rays reflected from some miniature mirror; they came from the landlady's window. 'Sure enough,' he thought; 'it is her window, and she has a new glass globe filled with fresh water and three little goldfish swimming prettily in it, enjoying the privilege of a warm sun-bath on the window-ledge.' His old grudge against his landlady came to his mind,

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

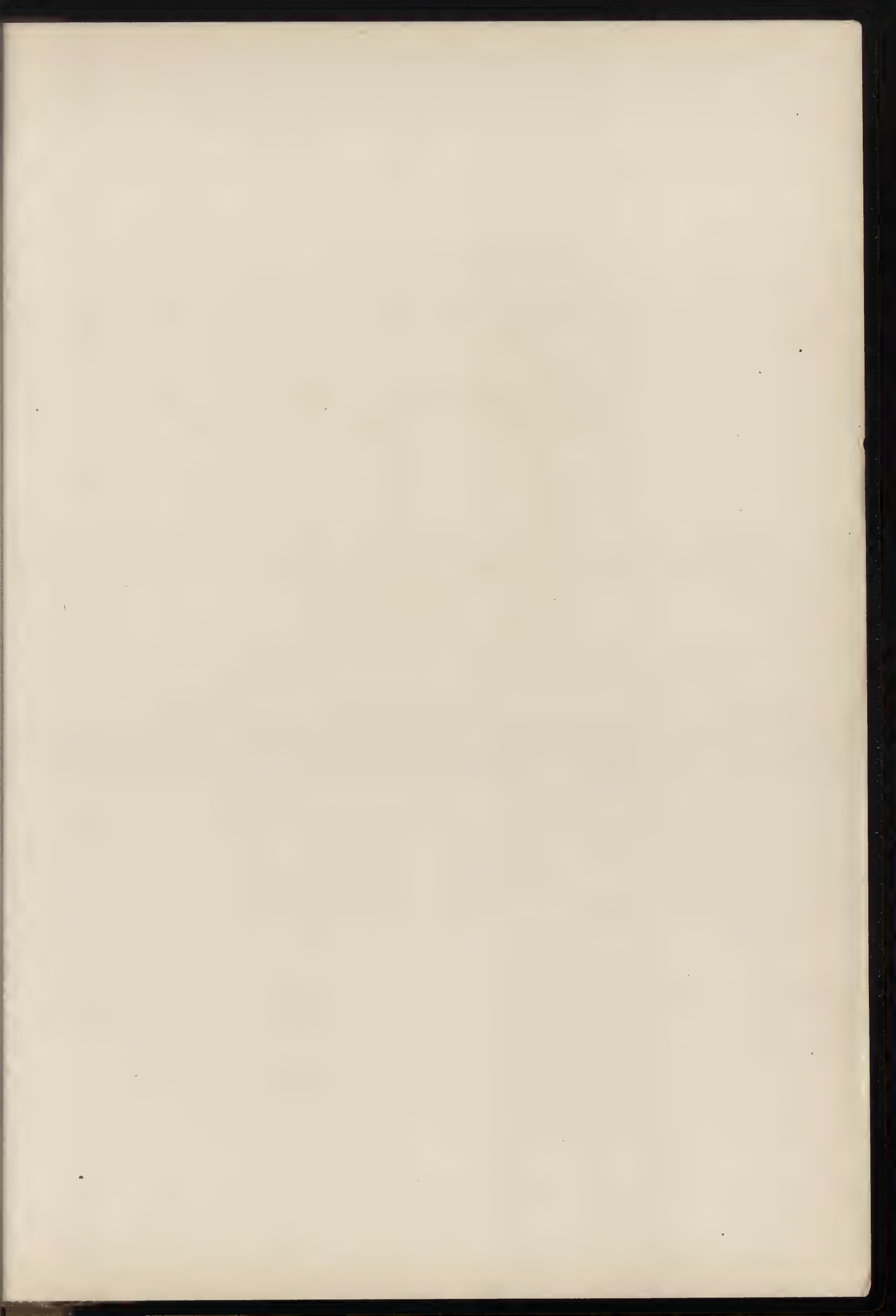
and with it a plot by which he could get even with her. He acted quickly and quietly. He got a pin, which he shaped into a neat little hook, and made it fast to a long piece of thread; he baited the hook, and let it down very carefully into the jar of shining goldfish; he caught one, and pulled it up through his window, unhooked the pretty little victim, laid it aside, and began to fish for another, which he soon secured. When he had succeeded in procuring all of them, he placed them in a frying-pan and fried them to a nice pale brown color." At this point Whistler stopped for a moment, rolled a cigarette, and watched the effect which his story had made. He smiled when he heard the obvious conclusion, and said: "No; he did not eat the fish. He was a genius—a

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

rare genius. If he had not been, he would have stopped there and eaten them, as any one else would have done. No, he did n't stop there. He took up each little fish separately, and in turn put it on his line, walked silently to the window, carefully lowered it to the glass globe, and dropped the little fellow back into the water. When they were back in place, floating on the surface of the water, he closed the window, and left his apartment for a walk before sundown.

"His landlady was greatly shocked when she found her little fish all dead. In consternation, she called in her neighbors to examine them, and they declared that it was the heat of the sun that had fried the poor little goldfish."

The above story was related by Whist-



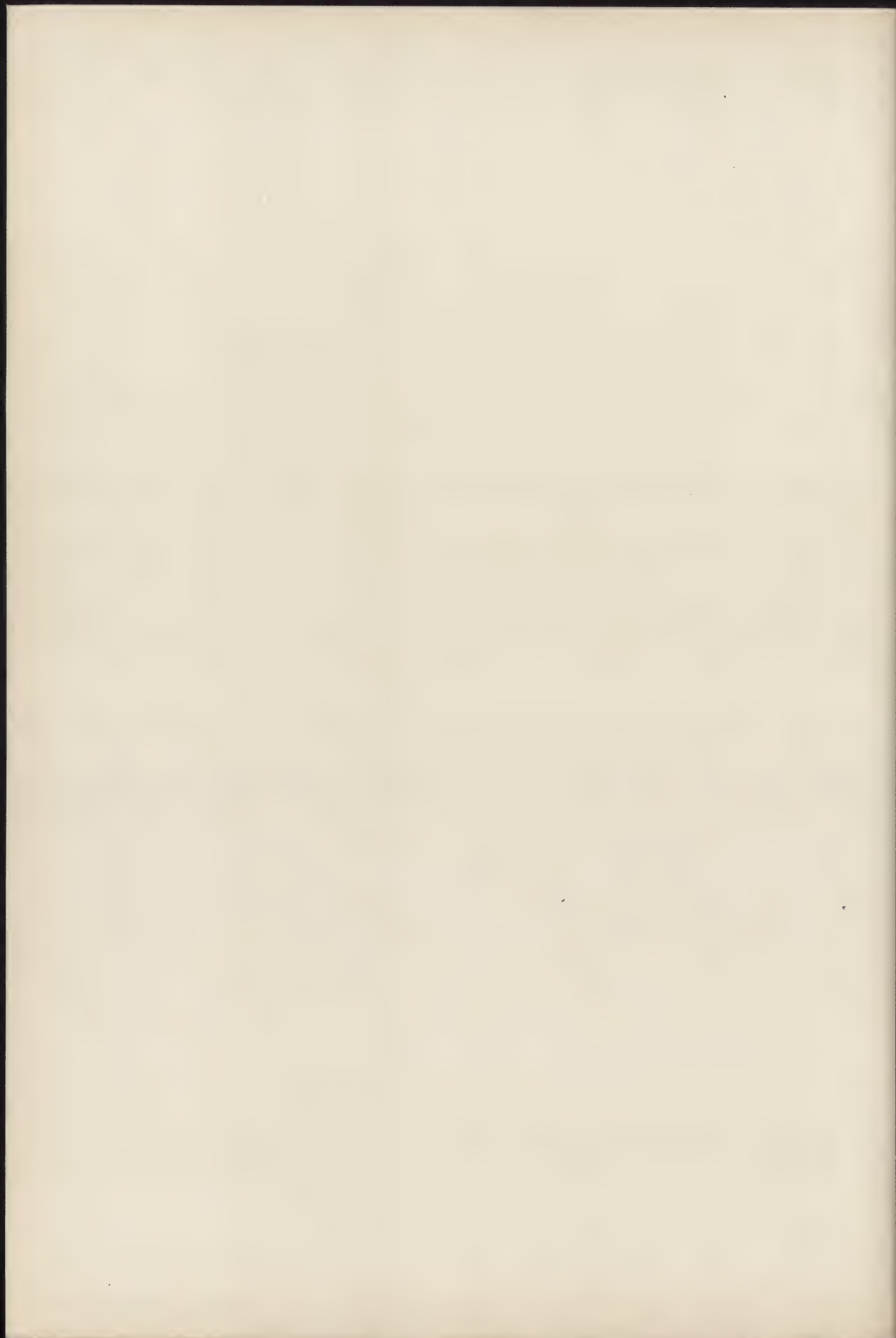


"THE GARDEN"—EARLY STATE



"THE GARDEN"—LATER STATE

The figure half-way up the steps has been entirely eliminated; the position of the right-hand figure in doorway changed; the brickwork around the outside of the garden doorway enriched and shadows along the water-line deepened



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ler to the writer in the Casa Jankovitz, Venice, 1880. Other accounts of the "goldfish story" are printed as having occurred in Venice in this same house, the owner of the goldfish being pictured as a beautiful countess, living on the floor below Whistler. This is not a fact, because the writer lived on the floor below him, and, moreover, there was no countess in the building that summer.

"WAS THAT A GOOD DIVE?"

"I WANT to make a good dive. You boys must show me how you do it when we reach deep water," Whistler remarked as his gondola pulled out from our house to a deep channel which was our favorite spot for bathing, because it was out of

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the line of regular traffic, and we were rarely disturbed by the swash of the large ocean steamers. The few dips Whistler had had previous to this from our cranky little craft did not discourage his eagerness to join us. He enjoyed the frolic with boyish enthusiasm. He would splash and break the water with his knees, owing to his inexperience in our American mode of diving.

He suggested that we change our irregular habits of bathing and set six o'clock in the morning as the proper time. He rigidly kept this hour, and insisted on every one of the boys being up at that time, ready to join him in his gondola at the foot of the steps on the Riva. And woe to the one who was not ready! His large, steady gondola which, from its pe-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

culiarity of construction, is known in Venice as a *barca*, proved an excellent boat from which to dive. It would hold ten of us comfortably, including the faithful old gondolier, who was always careful to keep one place dry for Whistler's spotless white, well-laundered shirt, waistcoat, and trousers, in readiness for *il signore* to don after his bath. It was a wise precaution; even Whistler had splashed water into the boat.

Whistler would carefully arrange his hands in a prayer-like attitude, as most beginners do, then dive quickly and fearlessly. Once he dived too deep, frightening us all. It seemed as though he never would come up again. We were greatly relieved when we heard his voice asking: "Was that a good dive? Were my knees

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all right? They did n't hit the water first this time, did they? It was a good dive, was n't it? Not so high, perhaps, as it should be, but Whistler will do that by and by."

One day, while swimming around the gondola, I saw Whistler talking to one of the boys, both standing upright on the flat, curved cross-board generally used as a support for the mast but employed by us as a diving-board. I was about to climb in, but changed my mind when I saw an opportunity for some fun. Acting quickly, and bracing my feet against the side of the boat, with my shoulders under water, I let go, and kicked the boat from me. It knocked them both overboard. Whistler struck upon his side, and went under. I heard a chuckle from

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the others before I dived out of sight, dreading Whistler's wrath on coming up. To my surprise, he was not angry; nor did he ask who did it. He simply said in that droll way of his, "Was that a good dive?"

THE CHURCH BELLS

THE belfry of the church back of the Casa Jankovitz was near the rear windows of the upper floor of our house, close to Whistler's room. In warm days the windows were open, and the constant ringing of the bells annoyed him very much. His frequent question, "How long does the law of Venice permit a church bell to ring?" was amusing to all.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

The American consul told him that most churches pay no attention to the law, which, if enforced, would allow them to ring their bells two minutes only, stopping for a period of five minutes before beginning again.

Whistler timed the bells one day by his watch, and found they were running overtime. Reaching out from his window, he succeeded in silencing them by holding on to the rope with a crooked nail fastened into the end of a pole. Suddenly the belfry-door opened, a choir-boy appeared, and, seeing what was the cause of the trouble, hastily withdrew. Some one tried to ring the bell again, and Whistler held on to the rope as tightly as he could. The little door opened again, and this time the priest appeared in full vest-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ments, looked with concern, and beckoned Whistler to desist. It was unfortunate to interfere with ceremonies and prayers, and worse to be caught. However, Whistler dashed furiously at the good priest with the language of the law and the annoyance of the bell, which, by the way, kept on ringing during the animated conversation that was growing louder and louder every minute. The good priest could not hear. He stooped over and grasped the bell-rope. The bell suddenly ceased. Whistler's object was attained. It was a ludicrous situation, and when the subject of their contention suddenly stopped, both smiled. The good priest understood and apologized, Whistler invited him to dinner, and they remained friends ever after.

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WHISTLER'S WHITE LOCK

THE following quotation is from a New York paper, written since his death:

No single item in Whistler's appearance was so celebrated as the solitary silver lock that stood out so from among the mass of his hair. It was his oriflamme, his panache. It nodded defiantly wherever his warring spirit carried him. It shone with a new gleam as he scattered the glittering shafts of his bitter wit. Legends grew around it. One was that he put it in curl-papers every night. Another was that it was really a sample of what the rest of his hair would have been if nature had been weakly allowed to take its course. A third was that he had sustained a blow there in his youth, and the hair on that spot grew white thereafter. "It is not a white feather," he said once. This was true. He had never been a coward.





SAN BIAGIO—EARLY STATE



SAN BIAGIO—LATER STATE

An additional figure is slightly indicated on extreme left under the butterfly; the figures on boat have been strengthened and the shadows cleared



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On one occasion, we heard Whistler exploding with laughter. We recognized the shrill voice of the mistress of our house as she joined in the merriment at the entrance below. The loud *ha-ha's* were coming up-stairs, Whistler talking at the top of his voice in Italian, interrupted by the woman's Venetian screeches and dialect. Every one in the house rushed to the head of the stairs.

When he caught his breath, Whistler exclaimed: "The Madam here came up to me a moment ago, saying, 'I must brush off something that mars your appearance.' Think of it!" he exclaimed loudly, between peals of laughter. "And just think what she did! She tried to knock off Whistler's white feather!"

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

The white lock, dry and crisp, shot high up and out of a mass of black, curly hair that usually had the appearance of having had an over-application of hair-oil. It was a birth-mark, so he told me; one that persisted in other members of his family. His sister had a white lock, which she always endeavored to hide; a cousin had an eyebrow streaked with white.

Whistler always tried to make this blemish prominent, laboring before a mirror, holding it in one hand, and fluffing out his curls with the other. The last touch was always given to the white feather. The soft brown hat which he wore was always tilted back behind it. He would often say, "The white lock should be seen first when Whistler enters a drawing-room."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

A RIVAL IN WHITE LOCKS

WHENEVER I found Whistler working in his window, I knew I was doomed to a late dinner. It mattered little if I came home afoot or by boat, his weather-eye guarded the only passage to and from the Piazza San Marco.

It was usually when he had no formal engagement on hand, at the time when other men had finished their day's work and were thinking about dinner, that he loved to take up a copperplate, place it on the ledge of his window, and go to work scraping or burnishing, sometimes rebiting or touching out here or there in parts, using his dry-point, nursing the plate through difficult passages, until the last glimmer of afterglow, long

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past sundown. From the open window he would yell, "Bacher!" If I seemed deaf, he would repeat: "Bacher, you are to dine with me to-night, remember. When you get ready, come up here."

If he once saw one, there was no dodging him. If one had plans of his own, it was necessary to come and go by stealth. Once out of the house, he was full of fun, and his comments on incidents along the way caused side-splitting laughter. At a certain *trattoria*, the padrone was sure to greet the humorous Americans, and was specially attentive to the epicurean orders of Whistler, who was often exasperating to his companions in the amount of waiting required to get something to eat.

The padrone was a large, handsome





THE LITTLE SALUTE

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

man, with a sympathetic face. He was probably a younger man than Whistler; his closely cropped hair was dark, with numerous spots of gray about the size of a silver dollar. As I looked, a thought flashed through my mind.

"Now is my chance," thought I. "I won't be afraid to say it this time. Whistler is in good humor."

As the padrone moved away, I said very seriously to Whistler, "Look at the padrone's fine head! He has more than one white lock; he has half a dozen."

Whistler readjusted his monocle, and looked critically at the head of the vanishing proprietor, and then turned to me with a faint smile of appreciation, grunting: "Uh! How dare you say that! Can't you see he has the mange?"

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BUTTERFLY

THE earlier Thames etchings had no butterfly signatures; the first appeared in 1859. An early signature of this description is to be found on "The Fur Jacket." In "The Harmony in Flesh-Color and Green" are two butterflies hovering over his own; in "Battersea," one is painted white against a dark background. It will be observed that each of these is painted on a rectangular shield.

Later signatures resemble the butterfly as we know it now, but in no case have I found it with a sting attached until the year 1880, when Whistler lived in the Casa Jankovitz. One day he found a scorpion, and impaled it upon his etch-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ing-needle. The vicious insect would strike in all directions, now and then hitting the handle of the needle with his curved spur.

"Look at the beggar now!" exclaimed Whistler, excitedly. "See him strike! Is n't he fine? Look at him! Look at him now! See how hard he hits! That's right—that's the way! Hit hard! And do you see the poison that comes out when he strikes? Is n't he superb?"

The insect seemed to captivate him completely, and I believe that the addition of the sting to his butterfly dates from this occurrence. In his writings, whenever he wished to emphasize a point, he sketched his butterfly with the sting directed toward the particular remark. He signed many of his letters with the

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butterfly, always placing it on the paper in a way that added an artistic charm.

FAREWELL FÊTE TO WHISTLER

ABOUT the latter part of August, it was generally understood that Whistler intended to return soon to London; the exact time of his departure was not known. About the same time, one of our fellow-students was to leave us for good, and return to his home in America. Such an event was usually marked by some kind of celebration, always a jolly good send-off.

On this dual occasion the affair was elaborate, with suggestions of oriental luxury. A large, open coal barge, with a twenty-foot coal-hole, was chartered for

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the purpose. Standing up in it, one could look over the sides. A complete transformation turned this shabby boat into a fairylike floating bower, festooned with the wealth of autumn. Sheaves of wheat, rye, oats, corn, and grasses, formed into columns, loomed up in artistic confusion. Between these, garlands of pumpkins, squashes, tomatoes, apples, oranges, and clusters of grapes were intertwined, with a multitude of Japanese lanterns. On a table were heaped huge piles of fruit and melons, some of the latter being broken open, and scattered around. Rich studio draperies, fastened above, led down to monster bowls of many salads, and to flasks of Chianti. Other bottles dangled among the garlands above. The arrangement re-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

sembled some ancient feast pictured in the old galleries. The small decks fore and aft were manned with oarsmen, and under an American flag was placed a throne for the guests of honor.

The start was made about dusk from the end of the Riva near the Public Gardens. Whistler arrived very late in his gondola, when we were far out in the lagoons opposite the Doge's Palace. Until his arrival, we had been allowed simply to feast our eyes on the abundance that lay before us. The chief drew the first draught from an inelegant loving-cup, then passed it round in the manner of a pipe of peace, and so the ceremonies began. Toasts and drinking of healths followed, and, later, as we floated upward with the tide along the Grand

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Canal, between beautiful palaces, we attracted the attention and interest of Americans and Venetians, many of whom followed us in gondolas. Rain made us seek shelter under the arch of the Rialto, where we remained until dawn, our coming awakening the boatmen who slumbered there. As daylight approached, there was a slight falling off in wit, wine, and song. The only incident that left a blot was when two men in light suits bunked in the forward cubby-hole, forgetting that it was a coal barge.

As it happened, Whistler was the last man to leave Venice. Long after our departure, he was still there, but he had had his send-off.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

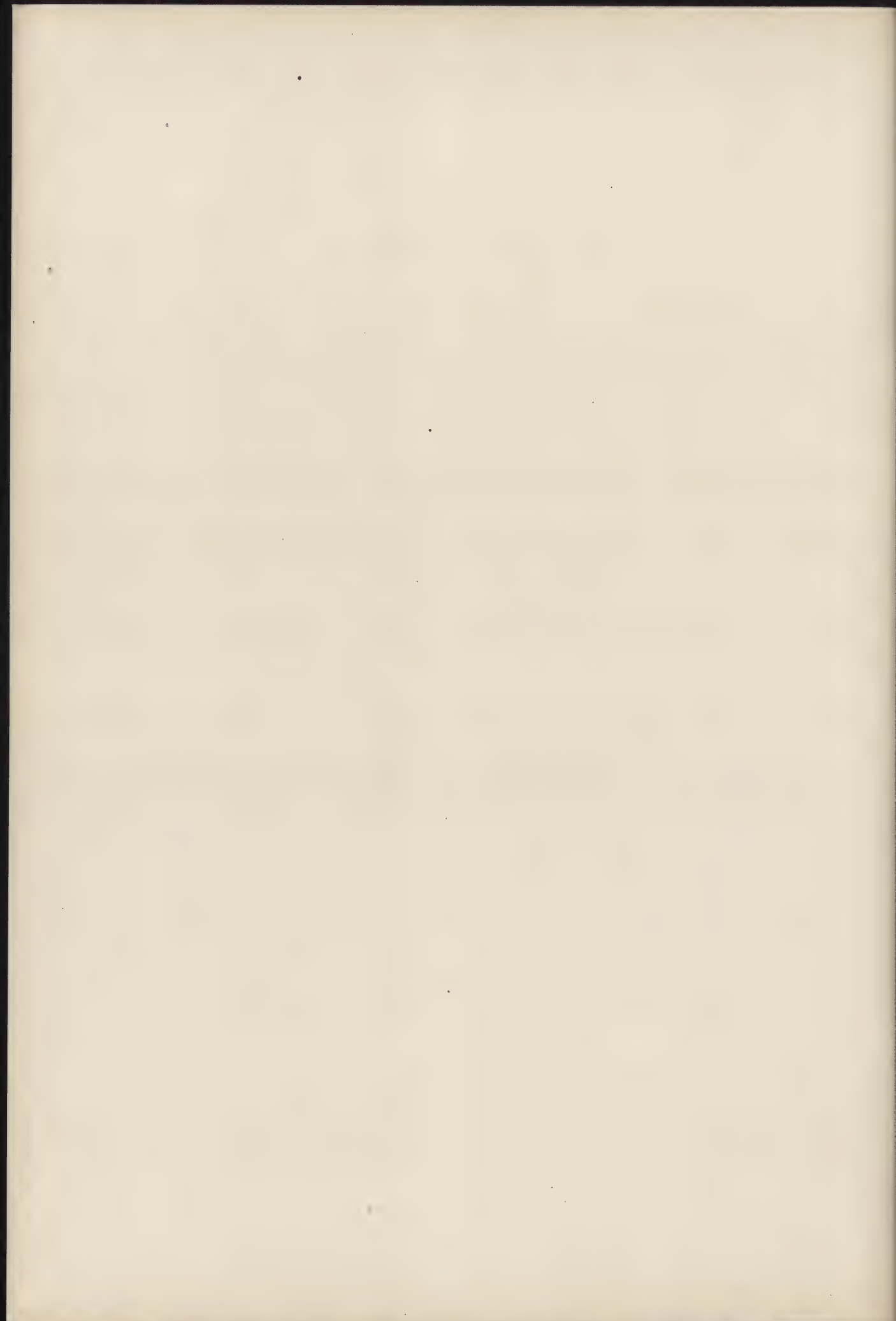
“HOW CAN WHISTLER GET BACK TO
LONDON?”

IN Whistler's early Venetian days, few of the profession held him in esteem, etchings were hardly known, and Whistler's had probably never been seen. Some people smiled at the mention of his name, others did not hesitate to say that he was a charlatan in art. All of this undoubtedly piqued a man of his type. It made Whistler feel as if he were out of the world while in Venice. He often voiced this feeling to me in this peculiar expression: “How can Whistler get back to London?”

The first time he said it, I was about to remark that a train would be a good way



A QUIET CANAL



WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

to get there, but I saw that he was perplexed, and knew that he did not put the question to me as a jest. Although I was younger than he, I comprehended what he meant, especially when he said:

“Whistler must plan to get back to London as Whistler should.”

He did plan, arranging and rearranging his methods of action, designing to meet all obstacles that he could then foresee. He labored incessantly, gathering more and more material for his future triumph. To Whistler, London was the world, for he said on another occasion:

“Whistler must get back to the world again. You know Whistler can't remain out of it so long.”

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

THE LEGEND ON THE WHITE HOUSE

WHISTLER often made mention of "the White House," built by E. W. Godwin, which he had owned just before coming to Venice. This house had been sold at a sheriff's sale. He related in his droll way of his use of the sheriff as waiter at the farewell dinner given there, and I took the opportunity to verify the widely circulated story of his painting on the stonework: "Unless the Lord build the house, their labor is in vain that build it."

"Yes," he said, "Whistler painted the legend upon the flagstone above the door—with a tall step-ladder and a bottle of ink. It took a mason several days to erase every trace of that inscription."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

He said this with a laugh that indicated his own appreciation of the joke. This house was occupied after its sale by Harry Quilter, an art critic of the London "Times." Whistler is said to have remarked, "Shall the birthplace of art become the tomb of a parasite?"

WHISTLER AND THE CARLYLE PORTRAIT

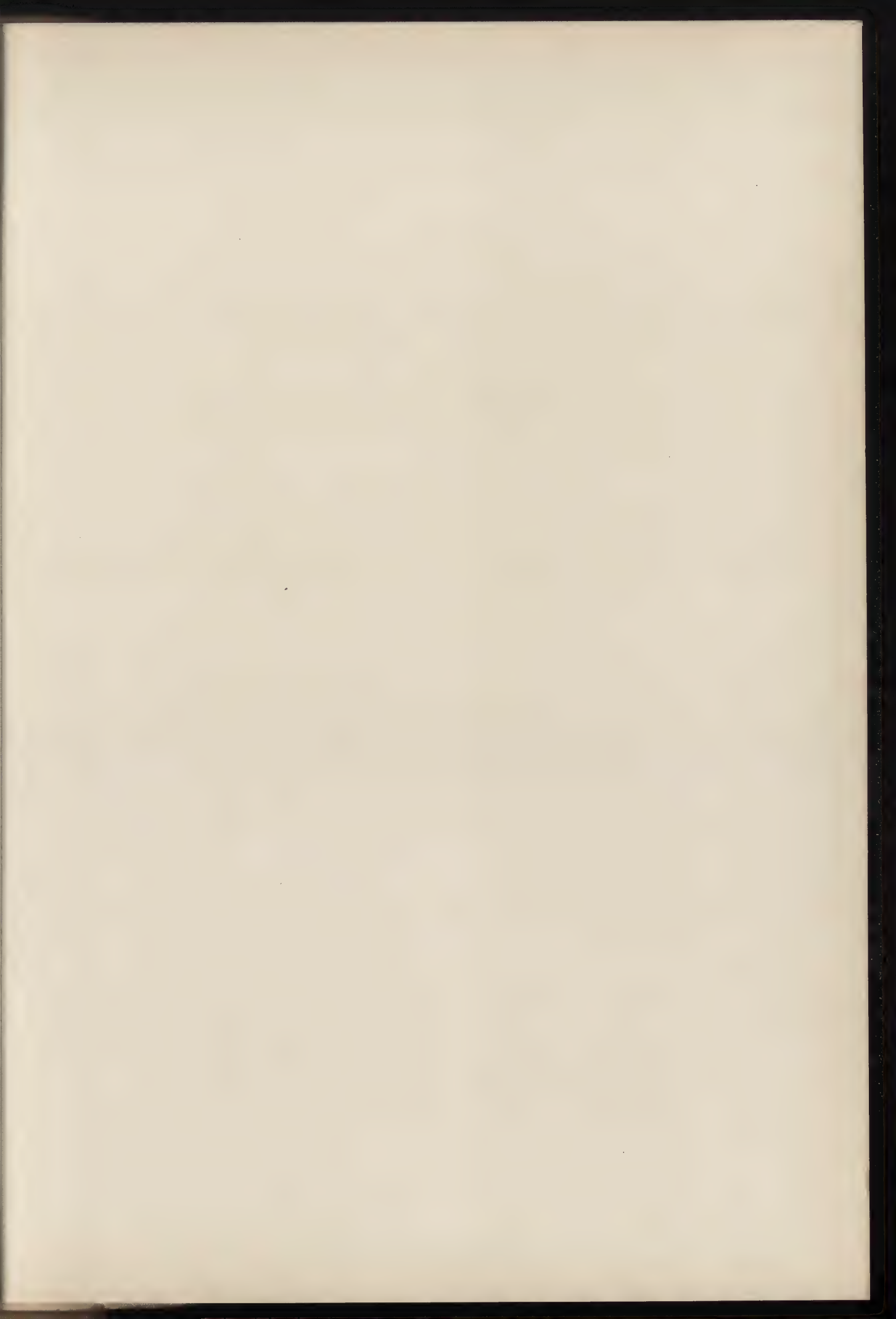
I ONCE remember telling Whistler that I was going to visit Bushey, Herts., to see Mr. Herkomer and his works. Whistler gave me a message to carry to the artist. I had a most pleasant day with him and, in the course of conversation, Herkomer said that one of Whistler's small out-of-door pictures of a fruit-stall was one of

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

the most wonderful pictures which he had seen in a long while. He remarked that it was beautifully painted, the fruits were charmingly arranged and took their place well in the perspective—the brush-work was marvelous because it was so simple.

“It was,” he added, “the greatest picture of the year. I believe it sold for a good price. Whistler would have sold his portrait of Carlyle long before if he had not written an impertinent letter to the committee at the last moment.”

As I knew but little about this matter, I made no comment at the time, but asked Whistler about it on the following day. He told me that a subscription had been started in Scotland to purchase the portrait for a public gallery. He had





UPRIGHT VENICE (DETAIL)

This plate represents only one-half of the completed etching. Whistler did this portion, made prints from it, and about six months later decided to add a new etching ground and finish the lower part. The complete etching is a well-known plate of Venice. Whistler had models and boats in his work upon the lower portion. It was in his work on this plate, that he said in reference to one figure particularly well drawn: "Does n't he stand well on his feet." In finishing the Riva, he merely suggested the broad marble edge and flat tile-like stones of which it is composed.



UPRIGHT VENICE



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been asked to fix a price and, considering the fitness of placing such a picture in Scotland, named five hundred guineas as a suitable one. On this basis the money was nearly all pledged when he learned that the subscription paper had stipulated that the subscriber disclaimed any approval of Whistler's art or art theories.

"I told them, that now they could not have it at that price and sent them a telegram something like this: 'The price of the Carlyle has advanced to one thousand guineas. Dinna ye hear the bagpipes?' That was the letter which Mr. Herkomer thought I should not have sent to the committee."

After saying this, Whistler made no further comment concerning what Herkomer had said, but went on to describe

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Carlyle's sitting for the picture, cleverly imitating the great author's manner of pose and speech. He said that Carlyle had told him that Watts painted his picture in a curious fashion. One day it would appear in some mysterious glow and, on the next day, another strange hue—possibly blue—while on the third—it would be changed into another mysterious color.

When completed Watts had asked Carlyle what he thought of the portrait.

"I thought," said Carlyle to Whistler, "that it looked like me but I said to him, 'I have always been in the habit of wearing clean linen.'"

As he said this, Whistler said that Carlyle fumbled his collar and looked at his portrait with approval. The portrait

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

was afterward purchased for the Glasgow Corporation Gallery at Whistler's own price.

PHOTOGRAPHING WHISTLER

IN the year 1885, I spent a fortnight in London with Whistler. I had with me a detective camera, for this was long before kodak days. It amused Whistler very much, and he was greatly interested to see what I could produce with such a "pretty little, simple box," as he called it. The neat, tiny adjustments and the method of procedure attracted him to the smallest detail. This kind of camera was known abroad only in a vague way and very few had been fortunate enough

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

to see one. Every one was anxious to see what my new American wonder could do. Some of the questions asked displayed the greatest possible ignorance of its workings.

I exposed several negatives of Whistler in different parts of his Tite Street, Chelsea, studio, but unfortunately the sea voyage had injured the sensitive plates; all but one were destroyed, as I discovered to my chagrin when I came to develop them.

The pleasure that Whistler took in being photographed and talked about was a foible, excusable when we consider the general artistic make-up of the man. Those who knew him well saw nothing inconsistent in it all; and to ridicule him would be as much out of place as to pun-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ish a child for its innocent vanity that comes to the surface as readily and unconsciously as any other emotion.

The withering sarcasm of Degas, were it not from a brother artist to whom we must allow the same latitude, and addressed to one who knew, also, how to sting, would seem altogether too severe when he observed of Whistler, as recorded by Mr. Winford Dewhurst, in his work on "Impressionist Painting," "You cannot talk to him; he throws his cloak around him—and goes off to the photographer."

Not long after my attempt to photograph Whistler he wrote me to know what luck I had had, and asking for proofs. I made a print from the one good negative and sent it together with the plate in re-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

sponse to this letter. In this print Whistler may be seen standing against his black velvet drapery, which he used as a background for most of his portraits. Back of him can be seen the canvases turned face to the wall, upon which were pictures in various states of completion. Poor as this negative is, it shows the small figure with turned-down collar and flowing tie, the white lock and single eyeglass, and his wonderfully developed hand. It is, in fact, a portrait full of character.

"GUARDA ABASSO!"

"GUARDA ABASSO!" is the usual cry of the gondolier as he guides his boat through the narrow canals of Venice. This

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

note of warning, echoing through the narrow passageway, notifies the people who live in the houses along his route to "Look below." Whistler's gondolier had guided him safely to a quiet spot from which his master was to work on some particular etching. He was intent upon his work when some one threw dish-water from the window above them. It completely covered Whistler, temporarily ruining his immaculate white linen clothes. After recovering from his surprise, Whistler commenced to use his Italian vocabulary in a very picturesque way, scolding loudly to those above, and ordering his gondolier to search for the guilty person. Of course, it was an impossible task, and after a few moments the boat was turned toward home, bear-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

ing Whistler very much upset by this experience.

AN INCIDENT IN THE PIAZZA

ONE evening, in the Piazza, Whistler and a group of "the boys" including myself, were seated at one of the Florian tables listening to a rendering of Wagner's "Lohengrin," by the military band of Venice. The Piazza was full of people, and among them I noticed the great composer. He was standing beneath the colonnade with his back to the band, looking in a jewelry window, apparently wholly unconcerned but really listening. He was a distinguished-looking man, rather short and heavy. He had one hand behind him in the pocket

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of a long broadcloth coat, from which a red handkerchief protruded. As the band came to the closing bars of "Lohengrin," Wagner seemed to be still more interested in the nearby window, but when the selection closed, he turned quickly, and pressed his way to the place where the band-master stood. Grasping his hand, he congratulated him on his rendering of the beautiful opera.

Ritter, who was one of the group at our table, commenced to tell Whistler that his place in art in England was analogous to Wagner's place in music in Germany, both being forerunners in their separate fields. The comparison pleased him—although Whistler was not an admirer of Wagner, preferring Beethoven to that composer.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

DER KRANKE BAUER

NEAR the Casa Jankovitz is an attractive public garden, located on one of the back canals, used mainly by Venetians for their *vino e bierra*, or a "bite to eat," as they say in Venice. Many of us made use of this nearby restaurant for our mid-day meal.

At the time of our first acquaintance with Whistler, we arranged to introduce him to one of our jolly, pleasant evenings in this open-air garden. Duveneck and a dozen or more of his pupils were present, Whistler being the guest of honor. The tables accommodated four, and soon we were arranged in no particu-

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

lar order but all close together, listening to the fun.

The evening passed quickly in such delightful company; everybody seemed happy and talked louder than usual.

"Silence, everybody!" one of the boys called out. "Duveneck is going to give us an imitation of 'der kranke Bauer'—so keep silent and listen."

Whistler, who did not understand German well, asked what it was all about, and was told that it was a clever imitation of a peasant sick in bed attended by his wife, Duveneck imitating this by means of a pitcher of water and a piece of paper.

"Turn down the lights," some one shouted and out they went.

Duveneck crawled in under the table

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

and began to moan, as a sick person would, until he attracted the attention of the peasant wife. An amusing dialogue in German ensued which seemed real and full of sympathy. Whistler, from time to time, would bother the nearest person to him by asking:

“What does he say? What does he mean now? What is he doing now?”

At the end of the clever imitation, he congratulated Duveneck and seemed surprised that as good a representation could be made.

The lights were not turned up for it was getting late. On our way home, we commented on Whistler's personal appearance in a playful but guarded way. He had on his old brown hat which had several holes worn in it and which had

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

settled into a desired shape. Some one remarked that it was a trifle "over bitten."

"There! there!" he said, with an assumed angry air, thereby turning into mirth and laughter the point of a pun on the only hat he wore in Venice.

DR. HADEN AND WHISTLER

DR. F. SEYMOUR HADEN, Whistler's brother-in-law, left England at one time to lecture on etching in America. I happened to be in London with Whistler at the time, and he said to me:

"Dr. Haden had better give Whistler his lamp denoting he is out, exchange positions with him, and Whistler will

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

lecture in the medical schools of England.”

TWO CRITICISMS

WHILE we were in Venice, a beautiful painting representing a minor piazza was exhibited in the window of the most prominent book-shop in the city. As Whistler and I were walking past, I called his attention to it and told him about the well-known Venetian artist, Tito, who had painted it. He stopped, looked at the picture very minutely and objected to every figure, and the rendering of the details of the beautiful buildings. There was not a thing that met with his approval.

His criticism of a student's work was

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

in an entirely different tone. Whistler had called upon a Duveneck boy who had showed him all he had done. He became quite enthusiastic over the study of a child that was made in a sitting.

"This is painted better than you imagine," said he, "so keep it to compare with your future things."

My friend scraped out the picture.

A PENCIL SKETCH

ONE moonlight evening, Whistler and I were walking on the Riva, when we came to a picturesque group of boats which had been moored for the night.

"Have you a pencil and paper?" he asked.

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

I gave him a pencil and a small piece of paper which I happened to have with me. He put in the boats with their beautiful, dark reflections in the water, delicately indicating the Saluti and the Doge's Palace in the background. With the simplest and fewest lines imaginable, he sketched one of the prettiest scenes of Venice.

"Give it to me to-morrow," he said, as he handed the pencil and paper back again.

In the morning, I gave him the sketch but he returned it, saying:

"I don't want it."

WITH WHISTLER IN VENICE

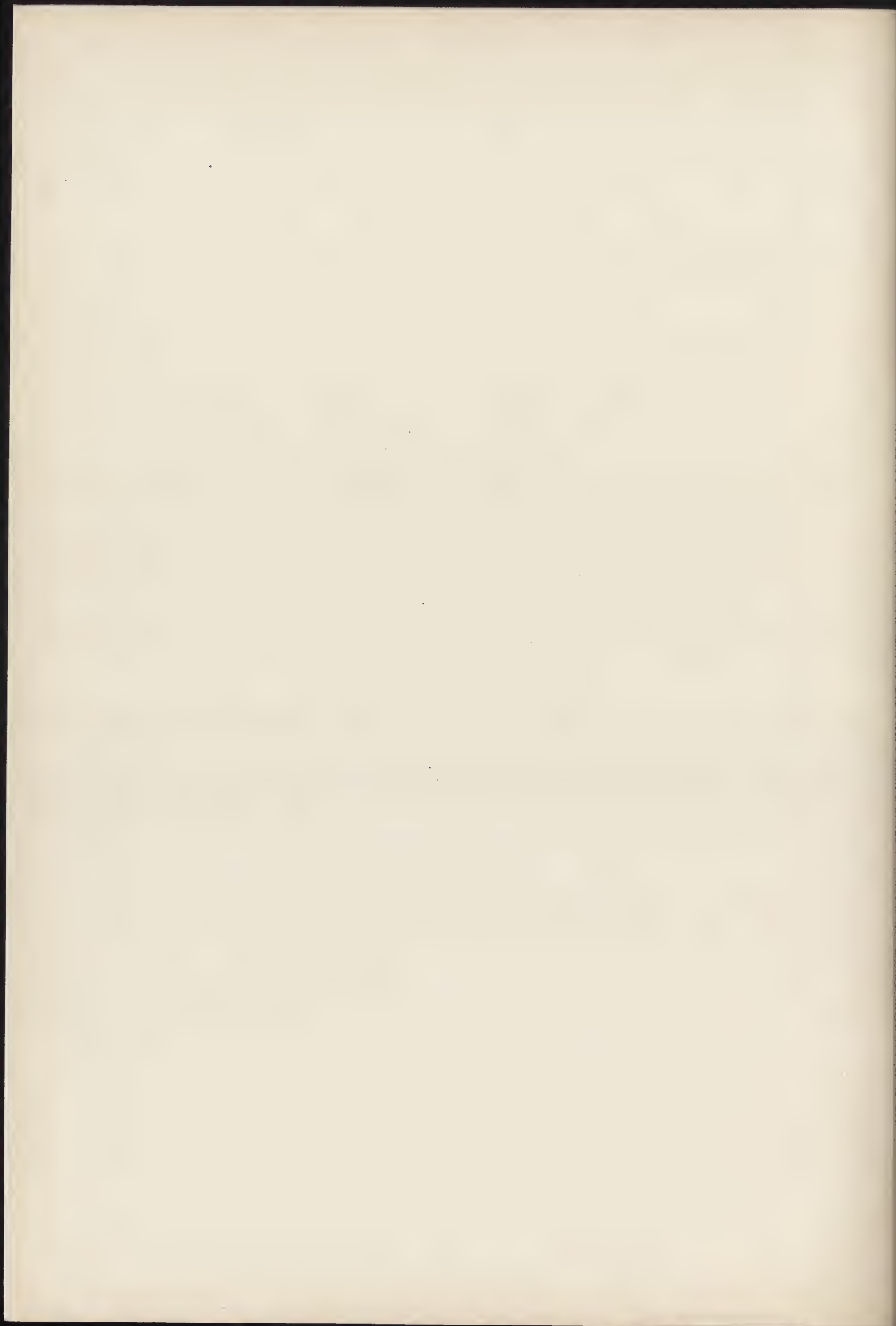
A COMMENT ON A LECTURE

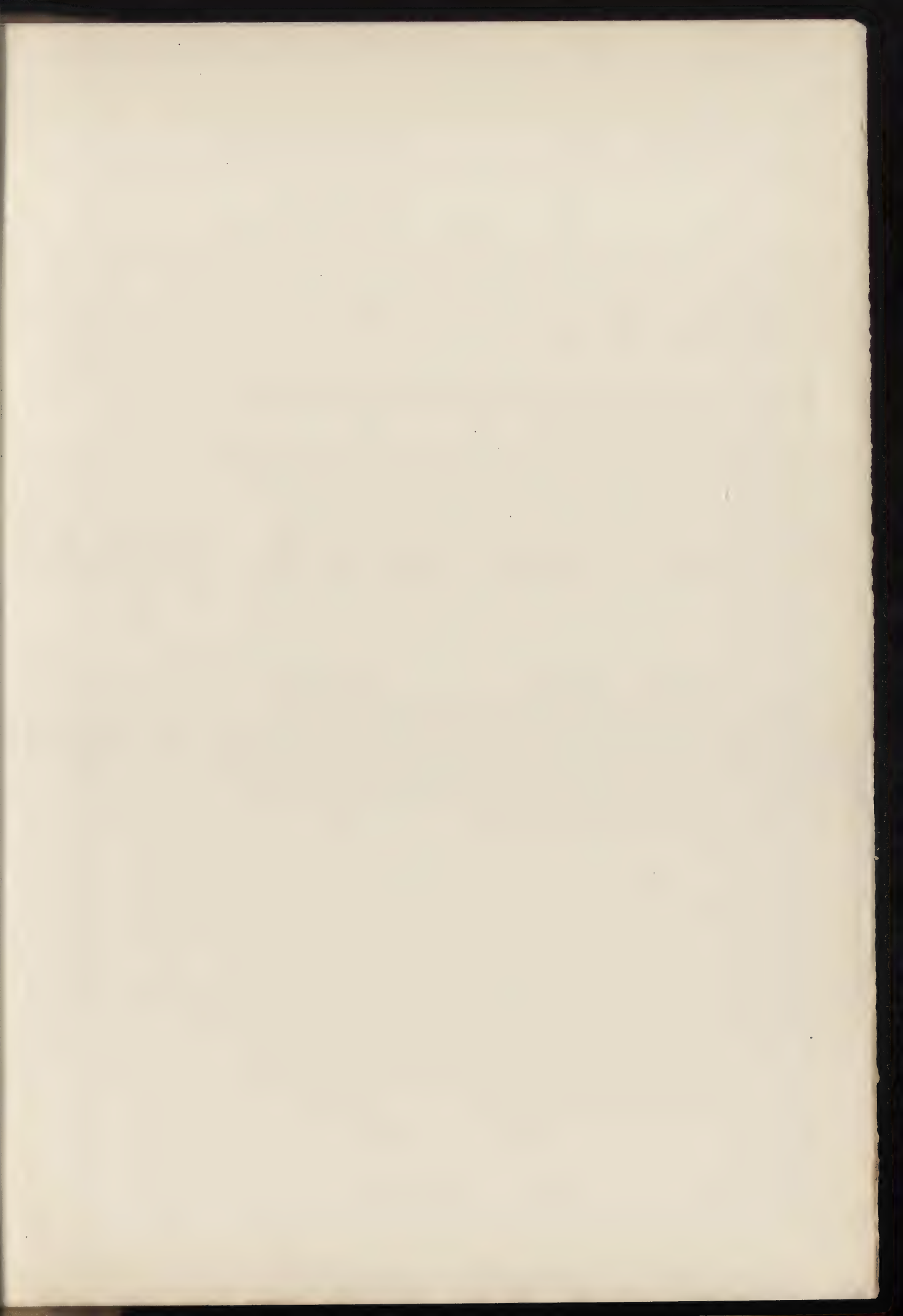
WHISTLER was very fond of the Doge's Palace, often expatiating on its exquisite beauty. On one of these occasions, I told him that I had heard Colonel Freeman lecture about the Palace while I was in America. He said that it was burned down twice and the Venetians, in rebuilding, made it so ugly that no one cared to burn it the third time.

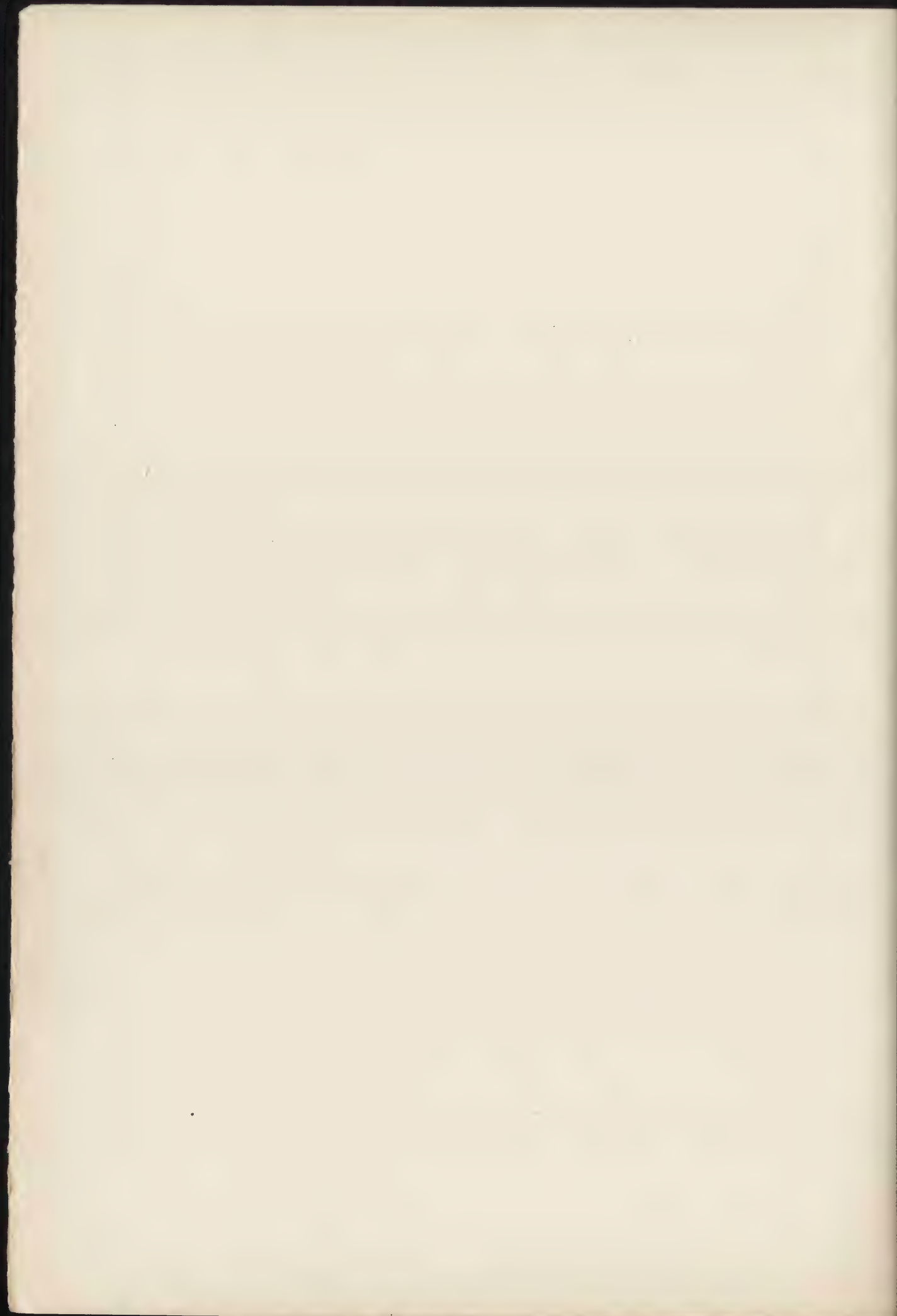
"Did the Colonel say that?" Whistler asked.

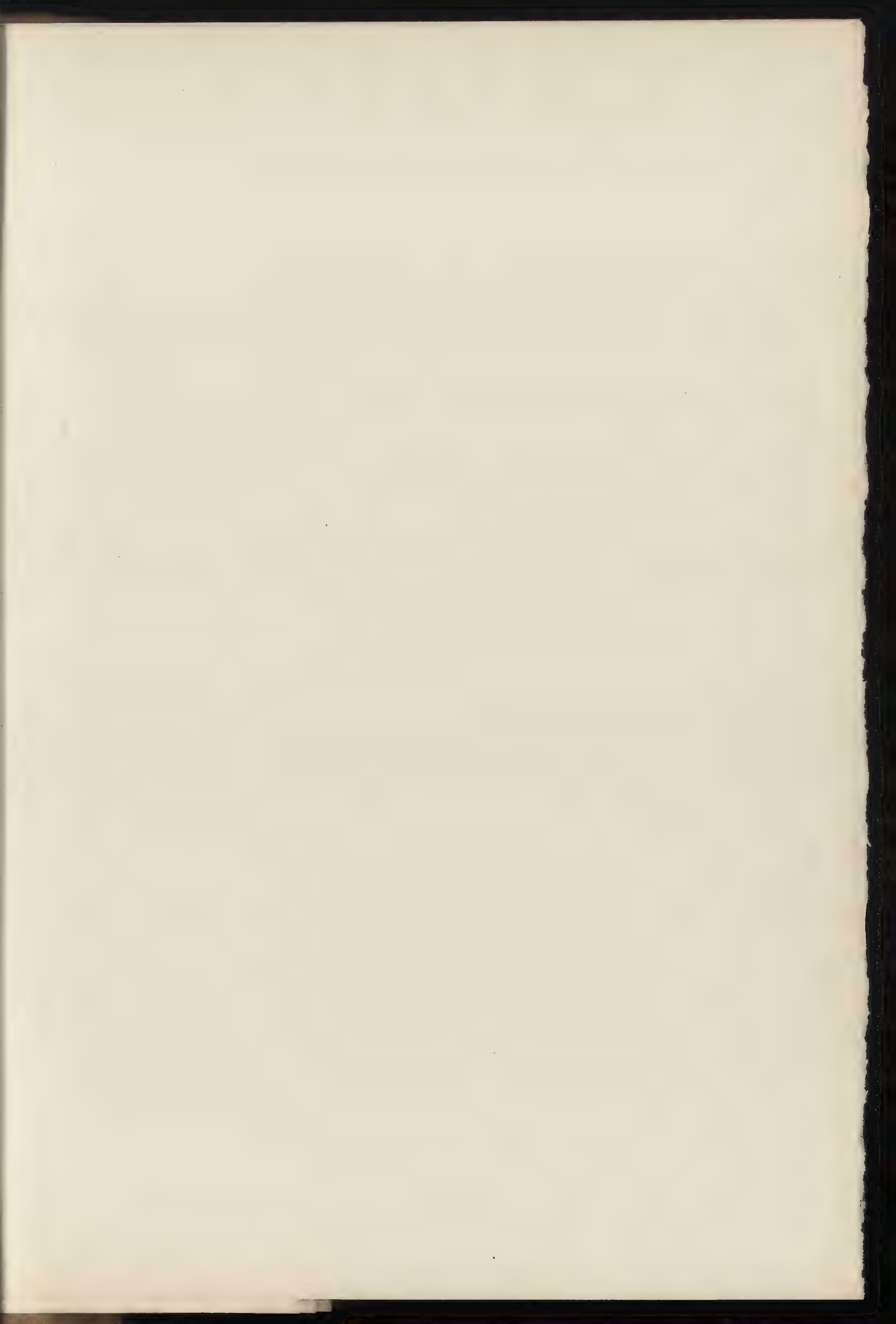
"Yes," I said, "it was part of the lecture."

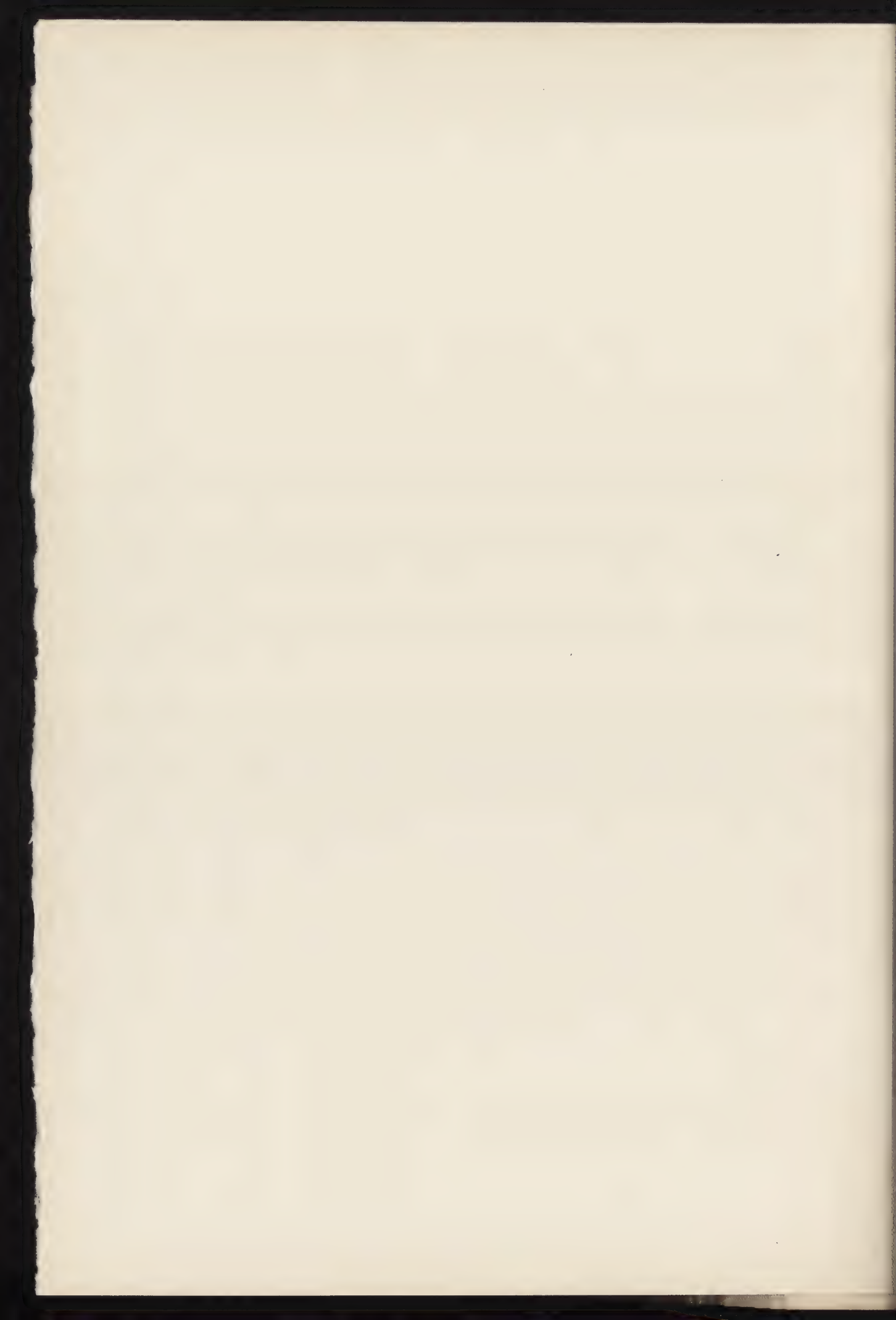
"Then I don't want to know him," said Whistler, never referring to it again.

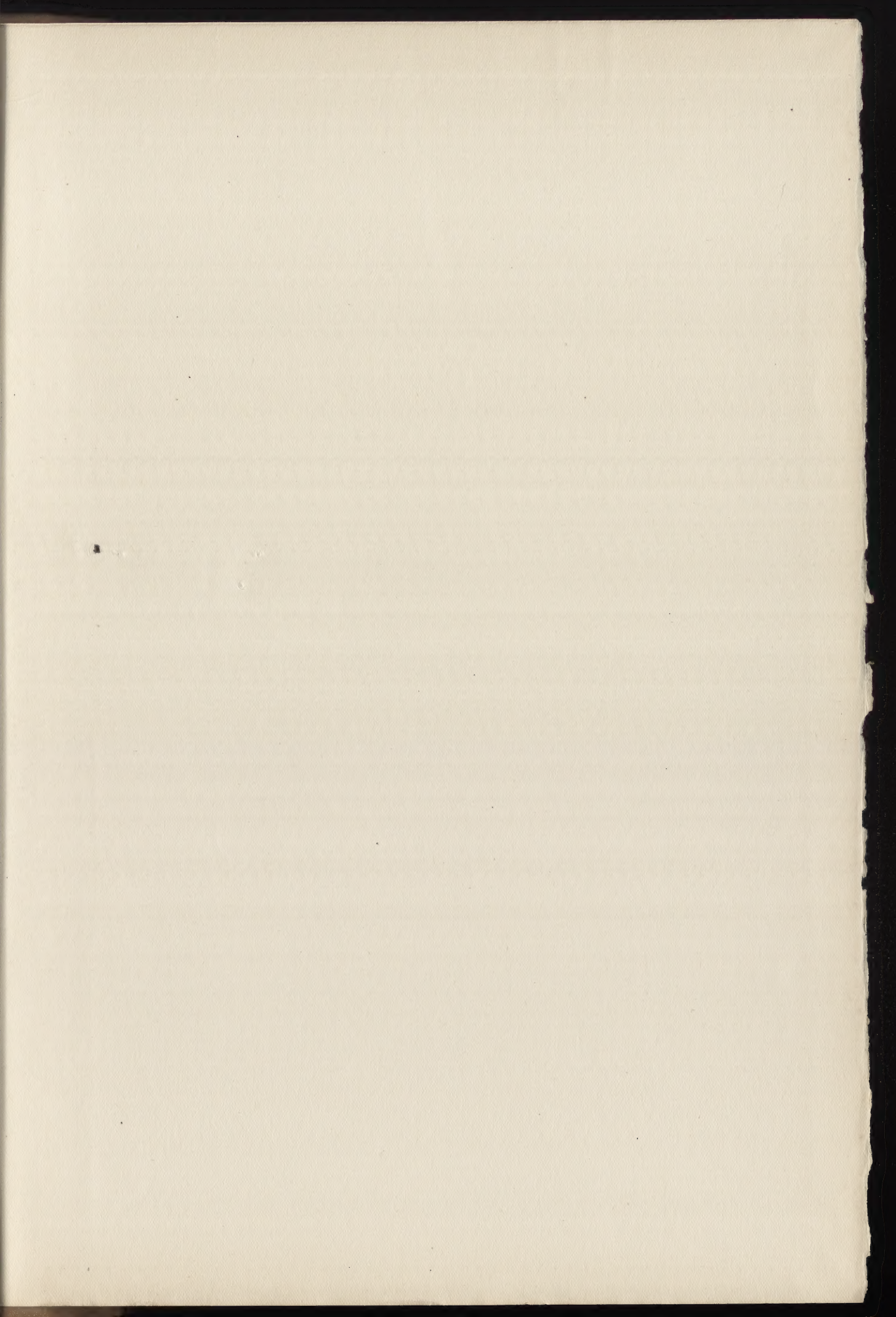














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